

BELIEF: Why and what we believe

Wilhelm Reich:
The Roots of Authoritarianism
School: Tyrannical Indoctrination

Atheism and Surrealism

Anarchist Religion?

fifth estate

Cuba:
Adios, Socialismo

**Conspiracy or
Anarchy?**

Water Wars & Climate Justice

Report from Bolivia p.12

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Commemorative march on the 10th anniversary of the Water War, Cochabamba, Bolivia, April 2010. —photo: Mona Caron

LETTERS

Our readers respond

Send letters to fe@fifthestate.org or Fifth Estate, POB 201016, Ferndale MI 48220
All formats accepted including typescript & handwritten; letters may be edited for length

Greetings Comrades,

I just want to say thanks for keeping FE going. Yes indeed, the longest running radical mag in the US. I just ordered another year's subscription.

I'm passing the word around to those I know might be interested. In an age of digital formats and slick websites I'm happy you are doing what you do to keep a hard copy in publication. Keep up the great work!

William

I loved it!

I just finished reading your magazine for the first time, the one dedicated to "The Radical Imagination of Ursula K. Le Guin," Spring 2010. It is one of the few anti-authoritarian publications circulating in prison. Well, I love it!

I especially appreciated "An Open Love Letter to Ursula Le Guin," because it pointed out how segregated our society is according to age. My thanks to author Jaimie Heckert. Most people walk (or

stumble) through life without ever noticing how such divisions smother out a love that is supposed to be shared between us all.

Many view the way we live as, well, just the way it is.

I am hoping that it is possible to get my hands on some of your previous issues. Us prisoners need informative and empowering reading like the Fifth Estate. It keeps light, life, and hope alive in our hearts.

John Clouser
Albion, Penn.

FE note: There's probably not a better statement of why we offer free subscriptions to prisoners and GIs. Please remember to add an extra donation to our Free Prisoner/GI Fund when renewing.

L@s Quixotes Books

Seattle's L@s Quixotes radical lending library/infoshop is currently being generously hosted by Pilot Books, 219 Broadway East, Upstairs.

Stop by to get a library card, borrow books, zines and CDs of particular interest to anarchists/anti-authoritarians, and to discuss the things you are reading, the things you want to read, or just to sit quietly and read. If you can spare books, papers, zines or CDs of interest to anarchists/anti-authoritarians, please bring them to donate to our collection, to share with others.

For more information about when you will find us there, and about

scheduled collective meetings, see our web site at losquixotesinfoshop.wordpress.com.

Donations can be sent to: Care of Boxholder, P.O. Box 14432, Seattle WA 98114.

Inmate Email

FE note: The following is a response to mention of an email system currently available to prisoners in federal facilities, in an update on Green Scare prisoner Marie Mason in our last edition. The program has been renamed Corrlinks and is available to selected prisoners. You must write a letter to ask an inmate to hook you into the system.

A short history of the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) e-mail system: I first ran into it at Federal Prison Camp Montgomery at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. TRULINCS started out as a test of an internal BOP e-mail system for inmates at six institutions in 2006.

Every federal inmate has a commissary account that accepts money from outside sources as well as deposits the internal pay of inmates for prison work. They can spend the dollars at the commissary store (once a week), use it to buy phone or e-mail credits, or send it home or to pay bills, etc. E-mail credits cost six cents/min.

There is a special room in the prison education department with 30-or-so computers for this purpose. The inmate generally has access whenever s/he is not working.

Come the new game: While I was at FPC Pensacola, Florida, the TRULINCS' system came there. I assumed it was pretty much the same thing. I was wrong. Someone in the system, or perhaps it was their scheme all along, saw the opportunity to have the inmates themselves divulge all of their contacts to a forever-memory computer system.

Clever. Very clever, and diabolical.

In addition to the e-mail service itself, the prison authorities now have centralized on-line the inmate's commissary account info, their phone and email list

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1. **Subscribe** Subscribers are a publication's life blood. If you bought this at a news stand, consider subscribing and buying one for a friend or a library.
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4. **Hold a fundraiser for the FE** A house party or an event not only provides revenue for the magazine, but gets people together that share similar ideas.
5. **Become an FE Sustainer** Sustainers pledge a certain amount each issue or yearly above the subscription fee to assure our continuing publishing, and receive each issue by First Class mail.

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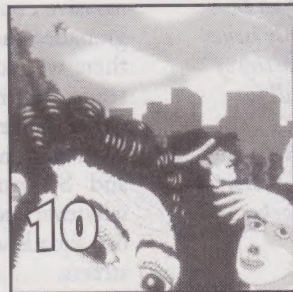
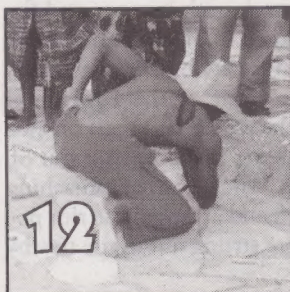


Kopimi - reprint freely

Welcome to our Summer edition with its theme of Belief/Disbelief/Unbelief. Our essays don't so much investigate beliefs themselves as much as belief *systems*, our cognitive constructions which determine our perception of reality. Beliefs can either chain us to repressive ideas or free us with visions that go beyond dominant paradigms. The entire modern era has been one of contestation as to which belief systems will rule in societies—ones that link us to submission and acquiescence to hierarchal authority, or those which rebel against them and eliminate the categories of rulers and ruled. Comments are welcome on the essays which follow.

This publication, now in its 45th year, continues to exist only because of the interest of subscribers and the generosity of our Sustainers and other contributors. Some of the latter may include a few dollars when renewing their subscriptions; others have made donations which almost make our knees quiver. But, all represent the best of mutual aid as well as expressing a desire to assure that the ideas and vision of anarchism are maintained in this small publication.

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The anti-austerity popular explosions in Greece may contain the future of struggles against capital

IN CRITICAL AND SUFFOCATING TIMES



Kanellos, the ubiquitous Greek Riot Dog, present at numerous actions (or is it PhotoShop?).



Demonstrators corner cops at May Athens demo

As a publication appearing only three times a year, it's difficult to report on the outrages of capital and the empire in a timely fashion. Usually, we cover only issues not available elsewhere. However, the Greek events of this Spring seem worthy of reporting and analysis as Capital's crisis becomes generalized and rulers' call for austerity enforced on workers becomes more shrill.

What follows is an edited version of the Ta Paidia Tis Galarias (The Children of The Gallery) group report on the Spring demonstrations in Athens against austerity measures, including the events leading to the tragic deaths of three bank workers and its implications for the movement of opposition.

Although in a period of acute fiscal terrorism escalating day after day with constant threats of an imminent state bankruptcy and "sacrifices to be made," the proletariat's response on the eve of the voting of the new austerity measures in Greek parliament was impressive. It was probably the biggest workers' demonstration since the fall of the dictatorship in 1974, even bigger than the 2001 demo which led to the withdrawal of a planned pension reform.

We estimate that there were more than two hundred thousand demonstrators in the centre of Athens May 5 and about fifty thousand in the rest of the country. There were strikes in almost all sectors of the (re)production process. A proletarian crowd similar to the one which had taken to the streets in December 2008 (also called derogatorily, "hooded youth" by mainstream media propaganda) was also there equipped with axes, sledges, hammers, molotov cocktails, stones, gas masks, goggles and sticks.

Although there were instances that hooded rioters were booed when they attempted or actually made violent attacks on buildings, in general they fit well within this motley, colourful, angered river of demonstrators. The slogans ranged from those that rejected the political system as a whole, like "Let's burn the Parliament brothel" to patriotic ones, like "IMF go away", and to populist ones like "Thieves!" and "People demand crooks to be sent to prison". Aggressive slogans referring to politicians in general are becoming more and more dominant.

The demo by the PAME (the CP's "Workers' Front") was also big (well over

20,000) and reached Parliament's Syntagma Square first. According to the leader of the CP there were fascist provocateurs carrying PAME placards inciting CP members to storm the Parliament and thus discredit the party's loyalty to the constitution!

Although this accusation bears some validity because fascists were actually seen there, the CP leaders had some difficulty with their members in leading them quickly away from the square and preventing them from shouting angry slogans against the Parliament. It's maybe too bold to regard it as a sign of a gradual disobedience to this monolithic party's iron rule, but in such fluid times no one really knows.

Soon, crowds of workers (electricians, postal workers, municipal workers etc.) tried to enter the building from any access available but there was none as hundreds of riot cops were strung out all along the forecourt and the entrances. Another crowd of workers of both sexes and all ages confronted the cops who were in front of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, cursing and threatening them.

Despite the fact that the riot police made a massive counter-attack with tear gas and fire grenades and managed to disperse the crowd, there were constantly new blocks of demonstrators arriving in front of the Parliament while the first blocks which had been pushed back were reorganizing in Panepistimiou St. and Syngrou Ave. They started smashing whatever they could and attacked the riot police squads who were strung out in the nearby streets.

Although most of the big buildings in the centre of the town were closed with rolling shutters, they managed to attack some banks and state buildings. There was extensive destruction of property especially in Syngrou Ave. Luxury cars, a tax office building and the Prefecture of Athens were set on fire and even hours later the area looked like a war-zone.

The fights lasted for almost three hours. It is impossible to record everything that happened in the streets. Just one incident: some teachers and other workers managed to encircle a few riot cops belonging to Group D, a new squadron of riot police on motorcycles and thrash them, while the cops were screaming "Please no, we are workers, too!"

Soon, the terrible news from foreign media outlets came on mobile phones: three people dead in a burned down bank!

There were some attempts to burn down

Continued on Page 34

Who Is Wilhelm Reich?

Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957) was an Austrian-born physician, psychoanalyst, and revolutionary. He worked with Sigmund Freud in the 1920s before breaking with him. His sex-political activities in Germany led to his denunciation by the Communist Party in the early 1930s and expulsion from the International Psychoanalytic Association at the insistence of his former mentor.

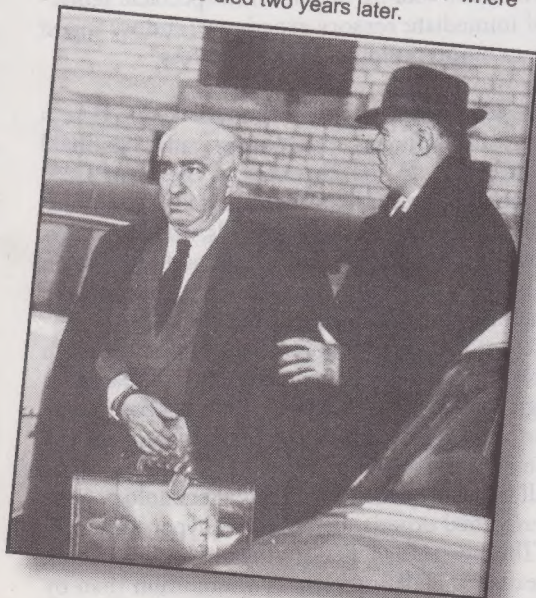
Reich developed the concept of Orgone energy to describe a universal life force. When the Nazis came to power in 1933, he was forced to flee to Norway where his research was fiercely attacked. In 1939, he moved to the United States, but soon became the target of an FDA campaign to destroy and censor his work.

The government obtained an injunction against the sale of his orgone energy accumulators, and Reich was charged with contempt for violating it. He was sentenced to two years in prison, and in August 1956, several tons of his publications were burned by the FDA in a New York City incinerator much as they had been by the Nazis. He died in Federal prison of heart failure over a year later just days before he was due to apply for parole.

His books include *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, *The Function of the Orgasm*, *The Murder of Christ*, and *Listen, Little Man*.

The Wilhelm Reich Museum in Maine, encourages visits to its exhibits and programs. On the web at wilhelmreichmuseum.org or at Orgonon, Dodge Pond Road, P.O. Box 687, Rangeley ME 04970.

Reich being led to federal prison in 1957 where he died two years later.



—Stephen Goodfellow

A Radicalization of Reich

Sexual Repression & The Roots of Authoritarianism

PATRICK DUNN

Wilhelm Reich's *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (MPF) was written in 1933, at the peak of Hitler's rise to power. The book is, most immediately, an attempt to explain the victory of the Nazis, at a time when economic hardship in Germany should have provoked a turn to the Left.

More fundamentally, as Reich writes in *MPF*, it is an effort to diagnose the fascist phenomenon, not as a trend of national politics, but, as "*the basic emotional attitude of man in authoritarian society, with its machine civilization and its mechanistic-mystical view of life.*"

A physician by training, Reich described this condition as an "emotional plague," a diseased character-structure common to individuals in mass society. Its source, he claimed, was the "mystification and inhibition of natural sexuality." Sexual repression was the cause not only of Nazi enthusiasm, but of social misery and human servitude more generally. Only by developing new, coherent forms of sex-economic practice could this servitude be overcome. In order to grasp the radical potential of Reich's thought, however, we have to revise its basic logic. The analysis of *MPF* is built upon three theses:

First, the economic theory of sexuality, borrowed from Reich's teacher,

Freud. This makes it possible for Reich to claim that sexual repression is the *root cause* of all social dysfunction.

Second, the belief that social pathology is essentially a problem of *ideology*. Sexual repression induces irrational beliefs, which in turn lead to bad politics. For Reich, this "irrationality" is defined as a failure to conform to the prescriptions of Marxist and psychoanalytic science.

Finally, the hypothesis of "work-democracy" – Reich's vision of a society in which sexuality is rationally self-managed. Here, scientific-industrial rationality serves as an implicit model for social and sexual health.

All of these theses are presupposed in the arguments of *MPF*. None of them captures what is most vital in Reich's critical project. By taking Marxist and sex-economic categories as his ultimate frame of reference for sex-political inquiry, Reich obscures his own radical insight into the nature of the emotional plague. A deeper inspiration is found in his attention to bodies and pleasures, and to their evisceration at the hands of mass society – in short, to sexuality as a *material force*.

Civilization operates as a self-imposed confinement of the powers of bodies and pleasures. We are much like the Marquis de Sade in his prison cell – except that our imprisonment takes place within the industrialized grid of everyday life. Repression is enforced, not through a mysterious psychic mechanism, but as a violence imposed by the material system of civilization itself. Until this system is dissolved, there can be no authentic sexual liberation.

Reich glimpsed this insight in his discovery of the "orgone energy," and in his experimental studies of pleasure and anxiety. His research was shaped by heteronormative, masculine assumptions, and by an excessive emphasis on the orgasm-function, but his vision of sexuality as a dynamic material force, discernible by the senses, remains significant.

It is by viewing sexuality as a struggle of material forces that we can understand the pervasive suffering that defines civilized life at all levels of the social order. The "emotional plague" is not an aberrant condition, limited only to Nazis and God-fearing mystics; it affects all who inhabit the technologized landscape of mass society. Its principal manifestation is not a renunciation of sex, or a lack of "orgastic potency," as Reich wrote, but a loss of our capacity for ordinary embodied experience.

We have become estranged from our basic relationality as physical beings. Our sense of place has vanished. We are deterritorialized, cut off from our immediate connection to the earth. It is quite possible to say that we no longer experience ourselves as *living*.

Most of our human relationships are abstracted, mediated, projected through screens and electronic circuits. Our sensory contact with other human bodies is indistinguishable from a virtual simulation. Metropolitan city streets provide the starkest image of our separation – the spectacular glass-and-concrete jungles, where ghost-like pedestrians brush shoulders without a glimmer of physical intimacy. The whole complex of industrial civilization seems to function as a gigantic orgone-box, in which erotic energy is sequestered and blocked out by a maze of artificial barriers.

This condition undoubtedly has roots in a crisis endured by our prehistoric ancestors. Sexual pleasure was an element of human experience from the earliest times. Domination of women, children, and nature must have played a role in the first eruptions of violence, human against human. Territorial conflicts among competing tribes might also have emerged at this time.

We can only speculate about when sexual pleasure first became a source of anxiety, but one thing is clear: Something occurred to precipitate a shift in the physical relations among early humans, and the wound has never healed.

A terror was awakened, a skin-fear, a flesh-panic. Bodies that once moved in harmony became alienated and divided. For millennia, prior to the use of language, sexual relations between humans must have been guided by direct empathic communication. At some point, this communion was disturbed, and the relatively short process of civilization was initiated.

If our goal is to restore our capacity for spontaneous bodily affirmation, we will need to pay close attention to this trajectory. It is absurd to think that sexual freedom could be achieved within the very institutions that have facilitated our enslavement.

The logic born of our prehistoric crisis – enshrined in the image of Adam and Eve hiding their naked bodies – culminates in the disembodied rationality of technological civilization.

The destructive capacity of this logic is directly responsible for our present catastrophe, sexual and social. Reich recognized the inseparability of social and sexual misery, but he believed, falsely, that a solution could be found within the order of work and rational self-control. As a devoted scientist, he judged the world according to the standards of his own ideal-type.

Now the problem has deepened, and more radical solutions must be explored.

Instead of rejecting the logic of slave-rationality, contemporary society has driven its forces to new extremes. In our age of terror and globalized mass media, the violent assault on bodies and pleasures is carried out through a total technologization of everyday life. Our senses are invaded by a constant stream of electronic voices, digitized images, and pre-programmed mass communication. Zombie-like participation in spectacle replaces the richness of immediate sensory experience, and we ingest psychiatric drugs to numb ourselves against the loss.

The sovereign, self-propelled human body is reduced to a lifeless cyborg. Headphones, cell phones, and handheld devices bind all attention to the channels of the centralized disinformation-machine, precluding any face-to-face contact. Despite having nine hundred Facebook friends, nobody knows anyone else. It is as if our senses are no longer able to rest on another body, on another a human face, unless it corresponds to some image within the globalized mass spectacle.

We have forgotten the joy of a chance encounter, the flash of shared intimacy, the sparks of silent attraction. Pleasure is ritualized and regulated at best; at worst, it is a packaged commodity, cooked up in a high-tech laboratory, and sold on the mass market as an exotic love-potion.

The irony of all this is that the more deeply technology penetrates into our embodied experience, the more hypersexualized society becomes. Thirty years ago, Foucault observed that power, in the realm of sexuality, is defined less by prohibition than by

We can only speculate about when sexual pleasure first became a source of anxiety

the inducement and multiplication of sexual performances. The question is not how to free sexual instinct from law and taboo, but how to use bodies and pleasures to counteract the organized regime of sexual self-constitution.

What Foucault failed to see is that this counter-conduct cannot simply be a matter of tactical modification – of finding techniques that will disrupt the dominant patterns and discourses of sexualization. Sexuality is fully integrated into the material infrastructure of machine-civilization, and it must be dismantled as a whole.

Sexuality is what results when the spontaneous power of bodies is divested, and pleasure is projected onto external objects of desire. It is a reification, rooted in forces of violence. The proliferation of sexualized representations is at the same time an intensification of the assault on bodies and their ungovernable capacity for pleasure.

In technological society, the reified grid of sexuality gives way to an all-encompassing spectacle, in which bodies are transformed into fragmented images, a kaleidoscopic theater of sexualized simulations. Internet pornography, cybersex, the omnipresent display of plastic and artificial bodies, sex-enhancement drugs, medicalized sex, sex with machines – these are the ruins of our common bodily existence.

We participate in endless ordeals of sexual selection, governed by the normalizing images of celebrity culture and mass media. We groom and fashion ourselves in conformity with this image-logic, only to consume a pleasure that has been determined, in its very nature, by the alien demands of technological necessity.

In one sense, it is the dispossession of sexual pleasure that drives civilization to generate new and more elaborate forms of bodily confinement. Given the originary nature of sex, and the patriarchal roots of domestication, it is logical to assume that

the suspension of sexual pleasure played a role in establishing the first marks of physical separation.

This would corroborate Freud's hypothesis of a primordial rupture in human life – an original moment in which symbolic culture triumphed over eros, reality over pleasure. We must not, however, make the mistake of transferring this rupture into modern life in the form of an unconscious principle – a notion that only obscures the material conditions of our ongoing imprisonment and blinds us to the choice with which we are perpetually faced.

Moreover, recognizing an essential link between sex and civilization does not validate the attempt, as in Reich's case, to seek out a universal sexual energy, which could then be examined, classified, and controlled as the basis for a new biopolitical order.

The importance of Reich's example lies not in the possibility of subjecting sexuality to the scientific gaze, but in the struggle to break down civilized barriers by experimenting with new bodily practices.

As Spinoza said, we do not yet know what a body can do.

We can add that the only way to find out is by trying. Our greatest potential for liberation is found in our ability to mobilize bodies to confront the civilized order that keeps pleasure imprisoned.

This means not only seeking out wild, ungovernable pleasures, but also tearing down the material structures that make these pleasures unattainable. And these destructive acts are themselves immensely pleasurable!

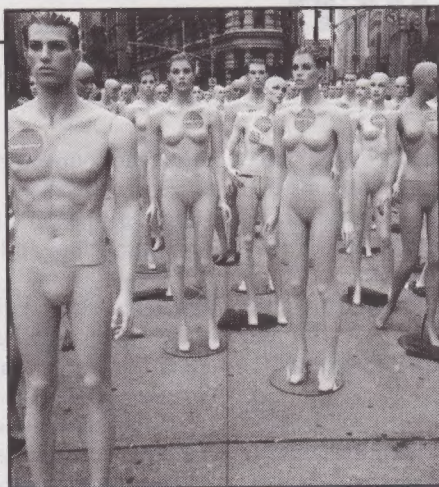
Revolt against the civilized death-machine, carried out in a blur of common electricities, is an experience of sensual awakening unlike any other. By pursuing such experiences, we restore the powers of the ordinary body and summon the forces of a more harmonious future.

In 1976, much of what had constituted the New Left of the previous years was in a state of terminal collapse.

As an example, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the quintessential white radical youth organization, whose numbers at its height were in the hundreds of thousands, was reduced to several dozen activists in the Weather Underground.

Similarly, the vibrant, so-called underground press of that era, which had a readership of millions and at least 500 regularly appearing publications, all collapsed with the exception of the Fifth Estate.

Rather than being exhausted by years of militant opposition to war and racism, and political wrangling, a small group of friends, who constituted themselves as the Eat the Rich Gang, took control of the Fifth Estate in 1975 at a point when the staff was about to call it quits after ten years of publishing.



ideas including Situationism, anarchism, ultra-left theory, anti-technology and anti-civilization, and the work of Wilhelm Reich.

The latter's writing gave clear explanations of why individuals would not act in their own self-interest even when presented with alternatives to the miserabilist conditions in which they found themselves.

The article on the following page appeared in the March 1976 issue when the FE appeared monthly. It was published with anti-sexual statements, including condemnation of gays, masturbation, and pre-marital sex, from the

Catholic Church and leftists including Fidel Castro and what became the Revolutionary Communist Party.

These are omitted here although the

Church's positions remain unchanged; the left has, thankfully, shed its Puritanism, at least in its public utterances.

INTRODUCTION: Wilhelm Reich, The Emotional Plague & the Authoritarian Family

Rather than retreating into the personalism of the 1970s, the new FE collective was excited by a host of new



—Richard Metz

Wilhelm Reich

by WALKER LANE

The Emotional Plague & the Authoritarian Family

The juxtaposing of anti-sexual statements by the Vatican and certain leftist leaders and groups [not included here] isn't meant as an exercise in cynicism, but rather to illustrate in graphic terms the role sexual repression plays within all authoritarian systems.

The Church, for example, is easily identifiable as a repressive institution. Its power to regulate moral conduct grew as did the centrality of its wealth and authority within the feudal system of the Middle Ages.

The Catholic Church was the international agent of feudalism, on the one hand, sanctifying its rigid social relationships as God-ordained and being the largest single landowner, on the other, holding a full one third of the soil of Christendom.

Its religious ideology tied people to the structure of feudalism's political economy not just through investing it with divine characteristics, but also by developing a hold rooted in people's basic psyche. This would tie them to hierarchical systems of domination and submission even when that particular form of economy, based on land ownership, had long been replaced by the rule of capitalism.

In all regions where religion flourishes, it functions as an important part of the control system and is heavily supported by the reigning political structure. Although the neurotic mys-

tics who founded religions did not necessarily intend that their creeds be used to entrench systems of domination, when the crippling power of religion became apparent, all rulers were quick to adopt and support it.

Denial of the flesh appears as a constant in the world's major religions and the importance of this mechanism of sexual repression can be seen as the key to the reason why people have been willing to passively accept the dehumanization of their lives since the rise of class society thousands of years ago.

Some explanation is needed as to why soldiers go enthusiastically into battle for purposes not their own, why workers slavishly labor to make others rich and powerful, and why all of us accept the whole of what civilization is today: the denial of human community and the affirmation of the State, hierarchy, and the general blunting of life's potential.

Always the readiness to submerge one's desires to the grand schemes of the Leader, the State or religion.

THE THEORIES OF WILHEM REICH

Social psychologist Wilhelm Reich suggested that the root of this "emotional plague" lay in the suppression of infant and adolescent sexuality — from harsh toilet training to punishing masturbation to teaching that sexual intercourse is "bad and

dirty.”

The child adapts to the punishments, threats, and scolding by repressing his/her sexuality. Further attempts by the child to affirm its sexual desires become revolts against parental authority and are met by further condemnation and punishment. The punishment assures that forbidden activities are infused with guilt feelings and ultimately produce an adult in which sexual drives and *all thoughts of rebellion against authority* produce anxiety, feelings of guilt, unworthiness and inadequacy.

In describing this process in *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, Reich poses the central question: “For what sociological reasons is sexuality suppressed by the society and repressed by the individual?” His answer is:

“The interlacing of the socio-economic structure with the sexual structure of society and the structural reproduction of society takes place in the [child’s] first four or five years and in the authoritarian family. The church only continues this function later. Thus, the authoritarian state gains an enormous interest in the authoritarian family: It becomes the factory in which the state’s structure and ideology are molded.”

What is produced is known to us all: passive, docile, fearful, dependent, obedient, malleable, respectful masses – in short, *the civilized human being*. Without the passive multitudes, the idea of the State, with its 8,000 year history of tyranny, ruling always in the interests of a few to the detriment of almost all, could not have lasted a single month.

The validation of Reich’s analysis of the role of the family can be clearly recognized in crude advocates of the state such as Adolph Hitler who said that the family “is the smallest but most valuable unit in the complete structure of the state” (*Mein Programm*, 1932).

Also, the family is not *just* the training ground for the authoritarianism that benefits the State, but its essentially undemocratic internal structure is a model of the State apparatus itself. At the head of the family stands its ultimate ruler in the form of the father; this is mirrored in the political realm by the chieftain, emperor, king, president or commissar.

The ruled or “governed,” both in the family and the State, usually have nothing to say about the administration of things or, at best, are given some formal say (elections or family discussions), but ultimately all important decisions are made by the father or leader. The enormous fear, respect, and deference granted rulers through the ages mirrors that forced upon us within the authoritarian family.

Swords have not been at the neck or guns at the breast of us as we reproduced society after society that has dashed the Living in us. “There is a gendarme inside every Frenchman” goes an old saying: In other words, the most powerful cops are inside of us.

Human families left to their own designs might have evolved to any possible form, including that of a non-authoritarian, non-patriarchal, democratic structure such as developed in isolated geographic regions such as Polynesia or the Philippines. Since such a family-type would not serve the needs of the reigning society, religion’s function is to imbue its compulsive sex morality with the quality of being above human affairs, pronounced from Heaven, existing before mortal humans and after.

Religion not only continues the process begun in the family and maintained through education wherein the individual is

taught to submit to authority, but also wraps the family in the mantle of sacredness, which insures its perpetuation as a social institution of control from one generation to the next.

A CRAVING FOR LEADERS

Our reduction to child-like states of anxiety and dependence creates a craving for leaders, not a situation where they are foisted upon us. There have been many social upheavals, rebellions, and revolutions against leaders and social systems (too numerous to count, in fact), but each time, after the blood and carnage were washed away, the basic relationship of rulers and ruled has re-asserted itself.

What was at issue was that the old society and its leaders had become *too* denying, *too* brutal, *too* incapable of providing for daily survival; the society or leader had ceased to be a good father/provider and the masses began searching for a substitute.

Was there anything in 300 years of daily life under Czardom in Russia that did not call every day for a revolution – autocratic rule, staggering poverty, serfdom, religious domination of social life? Yet the great masses of Russian people loved the Czars and worshipped them almost like deities.

It may be appropriate at this time to insert the important notion that there have been rebels and rebellions that have questioned all authority, from the family to the State, and for short periods of time conditions of genuine liberation have held sway over large numbers of people.

In the 20th century, activities of revolutionaries in the Ukraine (1917-1921) and in Spain (1936) come quickest to mind. Their suppression in those cases was accomplished militarily at the hands of leftist governments in the process of consolidating their political power and control of the State.

The elimination of these revolutionary social movements was considered to be of exceptional importance since it was recognized by the new reigning political powers that people in the act of rebellion have slipped (if even momentarily) from the shackles of authority

New rulers who have just gained social power through a social rebellion have as a priority, almost on a par with suppressing elements of the recently toppled regime, the repression of these very elements of the revolt that brought them to power.

It’s a tricky situation for the new rulers since to stop it too short would mean a containment of the revolutionary energies they are banking on to thrust them into power, but to allow the rebellion to go too far would bring into question the legitimacy of the authority of the new rulers.

George Washington and V.I. Lenin needed the revolutionary activity of the American and Russian masses, but neither of

At the head of the family stands its ultimate ruler in the form of the father, this is mirrored in the political realm by the chieftain, emperor, king, president or commissar.

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Conspiracy or Anarchy

Andrew Dobbs

If you think space aliens killed JFK and brought down the twin towers, and no one realizes it because of government chemtrails, you may think this article is part of the conspiracy.

Like God before her, Reason is dying. Her fast life has taken its toll: God took a millennium or two to live out His days, Reason has had a mere three centuries of gallivanting to the moon and back.

People now find her insufficient to explain their experience of nature just as they once found God unnecessary.

Rational logic triumphed because it didn't answer "because God made it so" or "it's magic." It offered more testable and nuanced *reasons* for natural phenomena.

Reason seemed more utile than her predecessors, but now this utility looks disastrously inconvenient: the threats of nuclear war, global terrorism, ecological catastrophe, cultural decadence and the misery of our emerging cyberpunk dystopia raise doubts as to Reason's ultimate usefulness. Social conformity is now called "Freedom" in the common tongue, and the load-bearing walls of power's edifice are called "rights." Logic no longer orders everyday reality, and Reason is increasingly impotent—the grave rushes to meet her.

In this context, myths—fantastic narratives explaining the mundane elements of natural experience have made a comeback. In their heyday, a dozen or more centuries ago, myths were inscribed in the discourses most credible then: bardic poetry, folktales, paintings and drama. Today's myths are inscribed in our most credible discourse: scientific theory. As Reason fails to explain public things, so-called conspiracy theories spread their thrall.

These myths are inherently reactionary, and any movement rooted in them will bear monstrous fruits destructive to human freedom. This is particularly exigent today because we risk *missing the moment* when Reason can be succeeded by something truly liberatory, where the terms of history are redefined and the opportunities for freedom might be wid-



—Stephen Goodfellow

ened. Knowing why people believe these ideas and how these beliefs rot movements for real change is key to making it through our times.

Conspiracy theories can appeal to some radicals by claiming to analyze issues of real concern. They see a world where power is concentrated into fewer and fewer hands, where state secrecy and surveillance are more and more common and in which popular opportunities for resistance erode further every day. These are real concerns, but conspiracists have inane systems for connecting these facts and they marry them to perceived threats which lead them to ignore real change.

A fevered hunt for new connections replaces honest curiosity, so conspiracists never really learn how power works. For example, every conspiracy theory asks the indignant question, "*Why* is the government keeping secrets if there's nothing to hide?"

Anarchy can answer this question: states lie and keep secrets because that's what they do. In totalitarian states nobody is allowed any secrets, but all of the states' activities are secret. Short of this, every state maintains secrets, and they all maintain surveillance methods to dispel individual secrets. Unanswered questions in the 9/11 Commission Report or shady behavior by G-men indicate nothing like what conspiracists imagine. It is done for no reason beyond the routine extension of the state's domain. It works better without a reason—you don't need a conspiracy to explain things.

Conspiracists attach themselves to retrograde canards of the ruling order. Our eroding "U.S. national sovereignty" is one of their chief worries. Sovereignty, according to the dictionary, means "the state of being a . . . supreme ruler," so the conspiracist right wing fears any alternate supreme ruler, such as the United Nations or the mythical North American Union that would replace the domestic nation state.

Internationalism and immigrants pouring across the border threaten them because it could mean they'll be ruled by foreigners rather than bureaucrats of their own color and kind. That perhaps each individual ought to rule oneself never occurs to them; they instead yearn for nationalism and that can purify their rule.

Even those leftists drawn from the anti-war movements or numbed to nonsense by hysterical Bush hatred end up as reactionaries. Progressives inspired by conspiracists get tunnel vision about “bankers” at the expense of analyzing capital’s broader crimes or apologize for the Taliban and al Qaeda as unfairly maligned by the “Inside Job.” That this fringe fantasy is now widely held among proles and radicals alike, is good news to power, indeed.

Myths also bear utility for their believers. Believing that rain comes from a particular deity with well-known likes, dislikes and means of communication assuages one’s concern about the weather. Similarly, believing that a clandestine cult has awesome control over the function of global power absolves one of any responsibility for power’s crimes. If 9/11 was the work of Dick Cheney, et al, and not al Qaeda, then the fact that North American people have long ignored or endorsed a loathsome Mideast policy in return for cheap oil and cash investment need not bother us. Like misbehaving children conspiracists insist, “not my fault.”

This is the soul of reaction, the ugly vice which doesn’t *hold us back* so much as *turn us out* (in the pimp’s sense); it makes us forswear freedom for some pitiful treat. Freedom only exists under conditions of responsibility, and responsibility itself liberates.

Once the horror of discovering your responsibility for the totality of your life passes, one is empowered. Direct action follows from this discovery; this is the heart of anarchy. To instead refuse even the merest responsibility for the prevailing order with fantastic scapegoats is to bar all paths to addressing our crimes.

Their praxis is insidious, too. The conspiracist bogeymen are, in fact, contemptible—bankers, the Bush and Obama administrations, international bureaucracies, but conspiracy theories take advantage of honest opposition to these elements and canalize this energy into irrelevance.

Conspiracists always demand “A New Investigation,” and their activism consists of the same boring, sign-waving, handbill pushing, and orchestrated shouting characteristic of the mainstream. As Reason dies, conspiracists exploit the energy of this revolutionary moment for base reformism.

Such reform movements improve power’s operations. Reformists cannot envision a world without state, money, or God, and insist that these institutions shape up and ingratiate themselves more comfortably into our lives. The institutions of authority benefit from the way conspiracist reformism makes the state a distant, omnipotent force as opposed to the immediate creation of our own perverted desires. Conspiracy theory seeps into all our ideologies, making resistance seem futile and submission inevitable.

Under anarchy, we liberate ourselves; under the conspiracy, subjection is our comfort.

Still, it isn’t just right-wing quacks and left-wing liberals who tolerate conspiracy theory; some anarchists do as well. If people now believe the bankers and feds can commit any atrocious act—kill thousands of their own citizens to start wars of conquest or use “chemtrails” to control our brains—they think, that is good. Yet while it is good that people believe the government is capable of any evil, conspiracists don’t follow this to the conclusion that the state ought to be abolished. Conspiracism does not undermine the state, the state’s crumbling legitimacy

creates the material basis for conspiracism’s rise.

Your typical right wing conspiracist just wants “the good ol’ days” back, or “Constitutional governance,” or other reactionary red herrings. Well-meaning progressive leftists—on the other hand—who lack anarchist or even Marxist theories of power end up spoiling campus radicalism, the peace movement, resistance to the expansion of the state’s power, and other movements. They supplant direct action or at least direct demands with pushes for the “New Investigation” and activism aimed at stopping fantasy threats.

If we are to tap the tremendous energy wasted in conspiracy mongering, we must start with the issue of efficiency. One can sympathize with some conspiracist concerns all the while offering better explanations. A tiny, interconnected, world-ruling elite does exist, but this elite’s power isn’t a secret, and their aims and operations are quite public. Self-replicating power inevitably accrues to fewer and fewer hands, but we don’t need the Illuminati or the Bilderberg Group to explain this.

It isn’t just right-wing quacks and left-wing liberals who tolerate conspiracy theory; some anarchists do as well

Direct action offers concrete opportunities to attack and undermine the *real* conspiracy of power. We can assume responsibility and be free. This narrative can compete with the conspiracism that oozes out of the status quo.

But anarchy is, after all, a narrative, a simplification of reality, a myth. Reason’s collapse is about how one myth—that innovation, technology and development can persist infinitely—has run its course. The desire for a new myth won’t be satisfied by some absolute objective standard for Truth, it will be satisfied by the strongest of Reason’s challengers.

Anarchy is a myth which posits chaos as the only true order, which indicts attempts at control for increasing the level of disorder. There is, thus, no power higher than the individual conscience ordering one’s own life.

Institutions of authority consume individuals as parasites on human life and freedom. By reorganizing our lives around human-scale institutions, and by creatively destroying the state, market, and church among other monstrous systems, human freedom can reign.

All this to say, what we believe matters. The notion that there are no natural laws and so our consciences are the highest power looks just as wild in the light of “reality” as the idea that a powerful secret cult rules the world for arcane ends. The difference is in what each demands of their respective adherents.

Conspiracists spin in a totalitarian frenzy; anarchists take power for themselves, over themselves. One is attuned to the decadent childishness of our time, eager to abandon all hope for freedom to avoid any threat of responsibility.

The other offers a maturity the future demands. Reason is dying, and a new answer will be sought by history soon. We can be defeated by this history or we can write it in the tongue of our wills.

Conspiracy or Anarchy: when many are compelled to answer, the age will have pulled up to its end.



Commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Water War in Cochabamba, Bolivia, April 2010. —photo: Mona Caron
Mona Caron painting the first mural of the entrance to the history museum in Cochabamba. —photo: Marcella Olivera

Tenth Anniversary of Bolivia's **WATER WAR**

REPORT FROM THE WORLD PEOPLE'S CONFERENCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE IN BOLIVIA

David Solnit

In spring 2000, the people of Cochabamba, Bolivia rose up against the privatization of their water, forcing out the US based corporation, Bechtel, and Bolivia's neo-liberal government to back down. The rebellion opened up new political space in Bolivia, catalyzing the most powerful, radical, visionary mass movements and mobilizations on the planet.

My friend and collaborator, Mona Caron, a public muralist from San Francisco,

and I spent six weeks in Cochabamba, a city in central Bolivia, during March and April co-creating art and visuals with local communities and organizations. We came

at the invitation of the organizing committee for the International *Feria del Agua* (Water Fair) commemorating the ten year anniversary of what has come to be known as the Water War. We also participated with 30,000 others in the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, organized by the Bolivian government of President Evo Morales.

At a Bay Area "Peoples Movement Assembly" of local grassroots organizations leading up to the June 2010 US Social Forum in Detroit, a well-respected, longtime community organizer spoke of his desire for a "socialism for the 21st century, like Evo Morales in Bolivia."

For many, Bolivia serves as a model and an inspiration to those fighting for change in the US and around the world. Bolivian social movements are among the world's most sophisticated and powerful and although Bolivia is very different, those of us seeking change in our own communities can learn much from what is occurring there.



Bolivian social movements have practiced two different paths of social change: by taking government power as Evo Morales and his political party MAS (Movement Towards Socialism) have done, or change

from below proposed in the past visionary movement-wide proposal for a Constituent Assembly, and in the well-organized, directly democratic and strategic practices of the movement organizations and mobilizations. Neither model fit's into simplistic old ideological boxes—anarchist, socialist or progressive.

I returned with a complicated view of Bolivian social movements particularly the contradictions of movements for radical change becoming governments, the Bolivian government taking leadership globally on addressing climate, and ecological crisis with its

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Peter Lamborn Wilson

“Anarchist Religion”?

Santería practitioners; Santiago de Cuba. —photo: Walker Lane

It's often said that we anarchists “believe humans are basically good” (as did the Chinese sage Mencius). Some of us, however, doubt the notion of inherent goodness and reject the power of other people over us precisely because we don't trust the bastards.

It seems unwise to generalize about anarchist “beliefs” since some of us are atheists or agnostics, while others might even be Catholics. Of course, a few anarchists love to indulge in the spurious disagreeable and pointless exercise of ex-communicating the differently-faithed amongst their comrades.

This tendency of anti-authoritarian groupuscules to denounce and exclude each other, however, has always struck me as rather crypto-authoritarian. I've always liked the idea of a “plumb-line” anarchism broad enough to cover *almost* all variants of dogma in a kind of acephalous but loosely “united front” (or “union of egoists” as Stirner put it). This umbrella ought to be wide enough to cover “spiritual anarchists” as well as the most inflexible materialists.

Nietzsche famously founded his project on “nothing”—but ended up having hinted at a kind of moralityless, even godless religion (“Zarathustra,” “overcoming,” “eternal return,” etc.). In

his last “Mad Letters” from Turin, he seems to elect himself (anti-) messiah of this faith under the signature “Dionysus the Crucified One.”

It turns out that even the axiom “nothing” requires an element of faith, and may lead toward some kind of spiritual or even mystical experience: the self-defined heretic is simply proposing a *different belief*.

“The Death of God” is mysteriously followed by the re-birth of “the gods”—the pagan deities of polytheism.

Thus, Nietzsche proposes the *re-paganization of monotheism* when he speaks as Christ-Dionysus—a project first launched in the Renaissance by such heretics and neo-pagans as Gemistho

Are all religions inherently oppressive or can non-official ones contain seeds of resistance?

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"Anarchist Religion"?

Continued from Page 13

Plethon and Giordano Bruno—the latter burned at the stake by the Vatican in 1600.

This very task—the re-paganization of monotheism—was carried out brilliantly by the African slaves who created Santería, Voudoun, Candomblé, and many other religions in which Christian Saints are identified or syncretized with pagan deities. Chango "is" St.. Barbara, for example; Oggun the war-god is Archangel Michael, and might be considered the Roman war god Mars, as well. (See M.A. DeLaTorre, *Santería*).

The saints are "masks" for the spirits of the oppressed—but they are not mere disguises. Many santeristas are *both* Catholic and Pagan at the same time—which naturally drives The Church crazy!

 As my anthropologist friend Jim Wafer said in *The Taste of Blood*, these New World faiths are not exactly "opium of the people" (even in the oddly positive and slightly wistful way Marx used that phrase), but rather *areas of resistance* against malign power. In such religions Dionysus can indeed "be" Jesus—or Obbatala Ayagguná—in a deliberate delirium of pantheism where nothing depends on mere belief because actual trance possession by "santos" (Orishas, Loas) allows *everyone* present to see, touch and even "be" the gods themselves.

(Wafer was once hit up for drinks in a bar in Recife by a stranger who turned out to "be" a minor rum-loving deity.) Moreover—another Nietzschean point—these cults value magic over morality—and believe in gods even for queers, thieves, witches, gamblers, etc.

Oscar Wilde was first to notice the profound likeness of anarchism and Taoism which structurally is an acephalous congeries of polytheist (pagan) sects, with a tendency toward heterodoxy and non-authoritarian social values.

Obviously some forms of Taoism—or any pagan system—have been quite complicit with the State; we might call them Orthodoxies, and in this sense forerunners of monotheism. But the pagan spirit always includes an anarchic element too—a Paleolithic resistance to the State/Church and its hierarchies. Paganism simply creates new cults, or takes old ones underground, cults that are and must be heretical to the ruling Consensus. (Thus, old European paganism "survived" as medieval witchcraft, and so on.)

In classical Rome, the oriental Hellenistic mystery cults, magical syncretisms of Greek, Egyptian, Babylonian and even Indian pantheons and rituals, threatened the traditional and Imperial order. One of these cults, a Jewish heresy, actually succeeded in "overthrowing" Classical paganism.

I suspect that a similar dialectic can be seen at work in 21st century USA with its "Imperium" complex, its 60 per cent churchgoing citizenry, its electronic "bread and circuses," its money-based consciousness, etc.

A mass of oriental and New Age "mystery cults" continue to proliferate and morph into new forms, providing (as a whole) a kind of popular heterodoxy or pagan-like congeries of sects, some of them inherently dangerous to central authority and capitalist technopathocracy. Indeed, various sorts of spiritual

anarchism could be mentioned here as part of the spectrum.


I'm proposing that fascist and fundamentalist cults are not to be confused with the non-authoritarian spiritual tendencies represented by authentic neo-shamanism, psychedelic or "entheogenic" spirituality, the American "religion of Nature" according to anarchists like Thoreau, sharing many concerns and mythemes with Green Anarchy and Primitivism, tribalism, ecological resistance, Native American attitudes toward Nature ... even with Rainbow and Burning Man festivalism.

Here in the Catskills, we've had everything from Krishnamurti to the Dalai Lama, Hasidism to Communism, Buddhism, postindustrial agriculture and Slow Food, hippy communes of the 'Sixties—Tim Leary-swami upon pandit, Wiccan upon druid—sufis and yogis—a landscape ripe for syncretism and spiritual universalism, ready to become a "burnt-over district" of mystic *enthousiasmos* for green revolution, if only some spark would set off a torch—or so one might dream.

In the context of the *belief*, I'm envisioning I would situate Walter Benjamin's notion of the *Profane Illumination*. How, he asks, can spiritual experience be guaranteed outside the context of "religion" or even of "belief?"

Part marxist, part anarchist, part Kabbalist, he carried on the old German Romantic quest for a re-paganization of monotheism "by any means necessary," including heresy, magic, poetry, hashish. ... Religion has stolen and suppressed the "efficacious sacrament" from the elder shamans, wizards and wisewomen—and the Revolution must restore it.

Recently, the idea of an historical Romantic and even Occultist Left has gained wide acceptance and no longer needs to be defended. Bruno's statue in the "Flowery Field" where he died remains an icon for the freethinkers and rebels of Rome, who keep it decked in red flowers. The alchemist Paracelsus sided with the Peasants in their uprising against the Lutheran nobility.

 n Emersonian reading of German Romanticism (especially Novalis) might interpret its "first thoughts; best thoughts" as seed and fruit of Revolution. William Blake is a radical heretical institution unto himself. Leftwing French Romanticism (and Occultism) give birth to a Charles Fourier, a Nerval, a Rimbaud. This deep tradition of "Romantic Revolution" should be added to the consideration of any possible anarchist spirituality.

The mystics claim that "belief" is delusion; only experience grants certainty, whereupon mere faith is no longer required. They may even come to defend mystical or spiritual (self)liberation against the oppression of *organized religion*. Blake urges everybody to get a system of their own and not to be a slave to someone else's—especially not "The Church's." And, G. de Nerval, who had a pet lobster named Thibault which he took for walks in the Palais Royal gardens in Paris on the end of a blue silk rib-

**THE PAGAN
SPIRIT
ALWAYS
INCLUDES AN
ANARCHIC ELEMENT**

bon, on being accused of lacking any religion, said, "What? Me, no religion? Why, I have at least seventeen of them!"

In conclusion: any liberatory belief system, even the most libertarian (or libertine), can be flipped 180 degrees into a rigid dogma—even anarchism (as witness the case of the late Murray Bookchin). Conversely, even within the most religious of religions the natural human desire for freedom can carve out secret spaces of resistance (as witness the Brethren of the Free Spirit, or certain dervish sects).



GOD: UNPLUGGED

Dan LaPonsie

"No, I think He looks better on the right," Bejewel said.

Lisp slid god back over to a right-of-center place on the mantel. The electric god was plugged into a wall outlet, casting a shimmering white light on either the right or left of Lisp's face – depending on where Lisp's older sisters directed.

Yes, god was bright. So much so that the features were fairly indiscernible behind the brilliant glow. Yet, god was not painful to look at. And, god was not painful to touch. As a matter of fact, god was quite cool.

"Who the hell told you that god is a he?" Annabel asked.

"Who the shit told you that our god was an it?" Bejewel said. She crossed her arms and looked at her twin with a fighting look in her eye.

Annabel gasped and put a hand up over her mouth. "I cannot believe you just used that sort of language. And right in the presence of It!" She pointed at god, sitting on the fireplace mantel, as ambiguous as an idea.

Mother called from the kitchen that it was dinner time.

After the two sisters left the room, Lisp unplugged god. The shimmering glow lessened a bit, but was not extinguished. She took god gently into her hand. Smiled at god. Kissed god. And then with a heave, she lobbed god toward the center of the room. God crashed against the floor, shattered into pieces.

Lisp jumped down off the chair to inspect god. Some of god sat on the floor in big chunks, some in little fragments. Some of god turned to dust.

The 4-year-old took one of the larger chunks in her tiny hand, and placed it lovingly on the right side of the mantel. Another was placed at the very center. Another, she placed left-of-center on the mantel.

Still another chunk went on the floor beneath a chair looking up to the mantel. Another chunk she set on the corner bookshelf, with a sweeping view of the entire fireplace mantel, from left all the way over to the right.

The remaining pieces of god she set in various places about the living room. The dust she kicked up into the air, to hover wherever the wind carried it.

Smiling with self-satisfaction, she toddled off quietly into the dining room to join her family.

Definitions seem less important in this process than the cultivation of what Keats called "negative capability," which here might be glossed as the ability to ride the wave of liberation no matter what outward form it might happen to take.

Back in the 1950s, it might have been "Beat Zen" (which sadly seems to have disappeared); today it might be neo-paganism or Green Hermeticism. Just as anarchism today needs to overcome and shed its historical worship of "Progress," so, too, I think it might benefit by loosening up on its 19th century atheism and re-considering the possibility (oxymoronic as it might be) of an "anarchist religion."

[Note: *In memoriam* Franklin Rosemont I should add that the kind of Hermetico-anarchism proposed here characterizes the late Breton, and later Surrealism in general. I'd also like to invoke the Arab poet Adonis's great book on *Sufism & Surrealism*. And, recommend the Harvard edition of W. Benjamin's *On Hashish*. Sometimes it gets down to that old deliberate derangement of the senses. . . . Sometimes the opium of the people is . . . opium.]

—Peter Lamborn Wilson
St.. Nicholas Day '09



"A way that is laid out, is not the way."
—Tao Te Ching

life is a journey
fraught with peril
the way is never clear
naive faith
and sarcastic doubt
circle aimlessly
resolving nothing
pay attention

your time is short

the way long

there are people watching television
while the house is on fire

—J.M. White

J.M. White is a dues paying member of the underground, a literary outlaw with jail time to prove that he is not as smart as he thinks, a multiple divorcee, hard-headed, incorrigible, contentious, cantankerous, guilty of everything; he is a patently anti-authoritarian, anti-religious, anti-establishment, immoralist currently hiding out on the back roads of middle-Tennessee.

FE Note: The comrades of Venezuela's *El Libertario* magazine are unrelenting in their criticism of what they call the myth of Hugo Chavez's "Eco-socialism of the XXI Century."

They often write about the general unwillingness to see the authoritarian side of Chavez as an echo of how almost the entire Left, including many anarchists, refused to criticize the Cuban revolution.

A longer version of this appeared in *El Libertario*, #51, available on-line at <http://nodo50.org/ellibertario> in their English section.

About the author: In 1955, Octavio Alberola organized in Mexico in solidarity with the Cuban struggle against the Batista dictatorship; later, directly supporting preparations for Castro's landing on the island.

In 1962, in France, he coordinated Interior Defense, comprised of Spanish anarchists in exile, the CNT, the FAI, and the Iberian Federation of Libertarian Youth, to re-activate the struggle against Franco's dictatorship. They carried out sabotage, attempts on Franco's life, printed clandestine propaganda, and helped people fleeing Spanish fascism.

Today, he works with the Support Group for Independent Libertarians and Syndicalists in Cuba (GALSIC), among other activities. He is the author of *El anarquismo español y la acción revolucionaria* (1961-1974) and *Miedo a la memoria*.

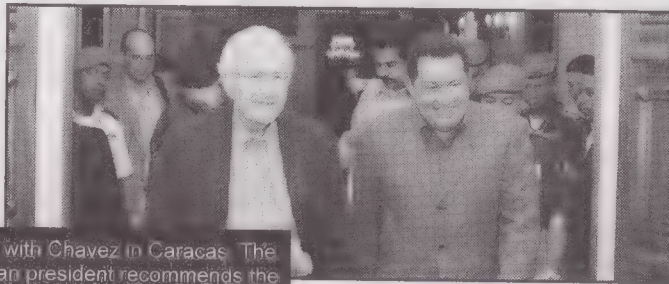
Contrary to what many think, the ability to believe in fairy tales and to blindly accept a fiction, no matter how fantastic or grotesque, is not the sole attribute of the dumb and ignorant.

The famous writer, Noam Chomsky, has proved that intelligent and cultivated intellectuals are also capable of believing and adopting conduct and political action totally dogmatic, false and authoritarian.

It is nothing new to see a highly ranked intellectual falling into such contradiction. In the Soviet Union and Maoist China, we saw the irrational phenomenon of the "fellow travelers." Those intellectuals who believed – many of them in good faith – in the establish-

ment of "socialism" and the construction of "the new man" in those countries until the facts forced them to realize what those regimes really were.

In Chomsky's case, it is not possible to forget that he himself fought against this tendency in the past. That is why it is imperative to ask: how can a man, apparently capable of reasoning, of critical analysis of what happens in the world, travel to Venezuela today to sing the praises of "XXI Century socialism" without noticing the military mentality of its inventor, Commander Chávez, nor the



Chomsky with Chavez in Caracas. The Venezuelan president recommends the scholar's books for their critiques.

Venezuelan anarchists see Noam Chomsky as Chávez's Clown

by Octavio Alberola

crass populism of his so-called Bolivar-ian Revolution?

How can Chomsky commit the same error as some famous intellectuals of the past century, some praising Stalin and some, years later, revering Mao and his Little Red Book? They did so because they believed that in Russia and in China they were building "true communism," and Chomsky does so now because he believes that in Venezuela "a new world, a different world" is being created.

HOW CAN HE FORGET THAT later all those intellectuals were forced to confess a "mea culpa" for their ideological blindness that prevented them from seeing what was behind the Stalinist and Maoist revolutionary discourse? That totalitarianism, responsible for the death of millions of people, inspired Castro to impose for fifty years a dictatorship in Cuba that Chávez devoutly imitates.

But what is surprising in the Chomsky of the last few years is not only his

apparent historical amnesia, but that he is receptive to the praise the histrionic Commander bestows on him, saying: "I give you the warmest welcome. It was time for you to visit us and for the Venezuelan people to see you and hear you directly," while the famed linguist shows his gratitude for these "loving and generous words."

What is most surprising about Chomsky's conversion to a messianic faith is that the [Venezuelan] "miracle" occurs after the collapse of "real socialism" of Soviet inspiration and the establishment of capitalism in China by the same communist party Mao left in power.

IN CONTRAST TO the young intellectual idealists who worshipped Stalin or Mao, Chomsky has been able to observe them in his lifetime and that makes more incomprehensible the fact that he now seems

to have forgotten. Above all, the failures of messianic revolutions confirm without a doubt all his earlier prophecies.

This happened despite the fact that Chomsky's ethical position, his ideological references, and his political activity are contrary to what many of his followers defend and value.

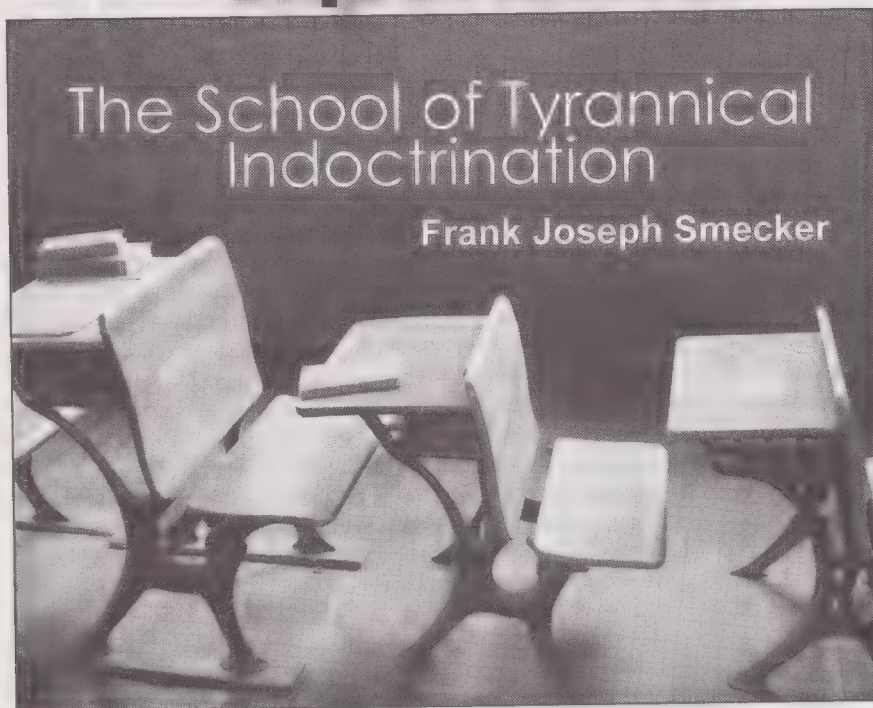
This is easy to see simply by reading his books, unless today's Chomsky is not the same who wrote: "We are in a time of corporatizing power, consolidating and centralizing power. Three important things come from the same background: fascism, bolshevism, and corporate tyranny. They all come from the same more or less Hegelian roots." (Chomsky, *Class Warfare*)

Could it be the fact that in Chomsky's view the most important thing is to denounce the injustices prevalent in the USA as well as the injustices generated by this country on a global scale, drives him to stake his position on what happens in the American continent in such a confusing manner?

Although Chomsky still considers himself "anarchist-libertarian," it's clear that for him ideological considerations must be relegated to the background and a kind of gradation must be made between injustices according to the degree of global danger posed by the targets of his criticism.

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Commodifying Experience:



In the mid- to late 19th Century, the rapidly expanding Industrial Age provided the impetus behind the expansion of the public school system. Reading, writing and arithmetic were pressed into service in order to form a needed literate labor force.

At the same time, it was important to assure that this newly educated proletariat remained obedient and submissive to authority. Subject matter such as history was taught from the perspective of great men and the victors of wars. Mathematics inculcated the presumption that the world is comprised of generalized numbers to be counted, manipulated and exploited. Reading and writing silenced languages older than words themselves.

With industrialism metastasizing throughout much of Europe and the U.S., alienation from an ecological provenance increased as did estrangement from body, mind, and emotions (already having suffered from millennia of civilization). Concurrently, such wholesale distancing and division from the natural offered an unprecedented level of control for the rulers.

Howard Zinn wrote in *A People's History of the United States*, "[H]igh schools developed as aids to the industrial system, that history was widely required in the curriculum to foster patriotism. Loyalty, oaths, teacher certification, and the requirement of citizenship were introduced to control both the educational and the political quality of teachers."

Clocks and bells primed individuals to respond to an employer's itinerary and to be more proficient in efficiency leaving no room for diversity or creativity. The emerging forms of production and wage labor necessitated uniformity for optimal and smooth functionality. Classroom rules themselves, such as raising-of-hands-to-be-called-upon, conditions the student to respond with deference to authority, to give one's self away to authority, chiseling away, piece by piece, at a sense

of personal agency. All of these elements and their implications remain today, virtually unchanged from their original forms.

Formal education, however, is much deeper than training individuals for a lifetime of wage labor. It is about instilling attitudes that remain by one's side, directing behavior and a fear of authority that propels a person to acquiesce to bosses and rulers.

Lewis Mumford, writing in *The Pentagon of Power*, explained that the Hobbesian vision of "life as a constant struggle for power motivated by fear, became the foundation of both the practical doctrines of imperialism and the ideal doctrine of machine-oriented progress, as both were carried into the nineteenth century as the Malthus-Darwin 'struggle for existence.'" This vision of life as a competitive struggle, motivated by fear, has imbued the classroom since its origins.

What can be said of the subject matter taught throughout classrooms today? Is it not all derived from a Western, white, civilized, upper class and patriarchal perspective of the world? Could it have anything to do with the perpetuation of the dominant culture by silencing other truths, histories, concepts, and theories held by a diversity of other cultures?

Seldom acknowledged in modern schooling are the qualities of pre-Columbian mathematics which enabled the Mayan people to develop the notion of zero and work with multi-digit prime numbers without the aid of a computer. There is little mention of Mexicano mathematics which allowed that culture to devise a calendar far more accurate than the one commonly used today.

And, what about arithmetic and subsequent mathematics? What are the costs of teaching people that the world is made up of generalized objects to be counted and used?

Anti-civilization author, John Zerzan, writes: "Our notions of reality are the products of an artificially constructed symbol system, whose components have hardened into reifications or objectifications over time, as division of labor coalesced into domination of nature and domestication of the individual."

Symbolism seeks to substitute a notional reality for real, physical one. This conveniently warrants cultural authority to express methods of control over a socially constructed world. What is the mathematization of nature other than reducing a dynamic and complex world to generalized, fixed, objective symbols, i.e., numbers to be counted, manipulated, exploited, and managed?

We can assume that $1+1=2$, but, what if "1" denotes an organic entity? Suddenly, "1" does not and cannot account for a web of re-

lationships, personal history, propensities, proclivities, affinities, emotions, and so on. It becomes silly to invest all you have in the assumption that numbers will reveal what's possible, probable, and necessary. The world can teach us that through direct experience without symbols.

Numbers are a gross misrepresentation of what they seek to replace. Environmental activist and author, Derrick Jensen, revealing the sociopathology of the dominant culture, says it is much easier to kill a number than a living being whether it is trees for thousands of board feet of lumber, tons of salmon for grocery store stock, or humans as collateral damage. Given the breadth and scope of the precarious and pernicious nature of numbers and mathematics, one must ask: What are the implications of an entire economic system based on the presumption that the world is comprised of objects to be counted and used? Essentially, the whole system of symbols we are taught to apply to everything is an instrument of control that is necessary for the domination of nature.

Why is it that we are not taught about the intuitive, subjective, relational and reciprocal aspects of life as well as the objective, instrumental and exploitative functions of human behavior? The purpose of school is twofold: to condition and frighten people into accepting an economic system that is predicated upon and accelerated by the transformation of the living into the dead (mountains into energy, animals into cold-cuts, humans into worker drones, ad nauseam) and, to normalize the violence and annihilation at the other end of a mediated and atomized industrial production process.

There is, irrefutably, an underlying curriculum to the schooling process. The rich cannot continue to steal from the poor and the powerful cannot continue to destroy the planet without an unrelenting centralization of their wealth and power. The

maintenance of power cannot occur and sustain its continuity unless individuals are trained to fill work and consumption roles and to perceive the world as generalized objects to be counted, manipulated and exploited.

Without specifically designed institutions of control and domination, no one would be willing to spend most of their waking hours at wage work, especially when the benefits of their labor is what maintains a perverse pattern of social inequality. One important function of school is to normalize this social imbalance and to create an acceptance of the vertical flow of wealth and its percolation upwards to the apex of the pyramidal hierarchy of the stratified social-construct.

Education exists in order to maintain production which necessitates a totalitarian system of ideas, institutions, beliefs, etc., identified as the control center of Mumford's *Megamachine*, or the *dominant-cultural-economic-power-complex*. This power-complex is not a tyranny endemic to vulturine capitalism, but emerges from the idea of civilization itself. Totalitarian underpinnings inhere within any of the governing institutions of contemporary civilization—democracy, fascism, autocracy, monarchy, etc.

Radical psychiatrist, R.D. Laing, asseverated in his landmark book, *The Politics of Experience*, that the way we educate people drives them mad. In order to restore to health to an entire planet and its inhabitants, the pathology of the dominant culture must be cured. This entails the unmaking of civilization, to allow the landscape of experience to reunite with the landscape of unadulterated life, where humans can once again make union with their ecological necessities.

This must be the aspiration of a new pedagogy of green praxis.

A Reader's Belief:

"Free oneself from an irrational belief in our need for authority."

In my personal experience, the simultaneous transition from Christianity to atheism, and from conservative statism to anti-authoritarianism, had ontological shifts to non-belief as their catalyst.

I have come to see belief in any political ideology as having essentially the same religious quality as belief in any religious system. Both, it seems to me, inhibit learning and the progression of becoming which prevent individuals and societies from growing beyond the confines of ideology and dogma.

Given the historical track record of authoritarian social organization, I submit that it requires a great amount of faith—of the religious kind—to accept authority and the state as useful in the modern human quest for freedom and sustainability.

It requires great faith in the ideal of democracy to place one's chips on reform and the efficacy of voting in a two-party system as the way toward a desperately needed re-

structuring of society.

It requires great faith in the supposed benevolence of concentrated, centralized power to think it likely that those who possess it have the best interest of those without it in mind. It also requires great faith to believe that those in positions of authority will ever give up their power without a fight against those who call for revolutionary change.

I prefer to think, open-mindedly, about the broad range of possibilities we have before us in present and past attempts at communal living, and efforts to establish egalitarian, autonomous zones. Also, in the countless human societies of our pre-civilized past which, while products of their unique times and places, are an example that things can be different; there are other possibilities.

These facts, which do not require the gamble of belief to accept, demonstrate that humanity is more than capable of producing anarchic societies that are humane, egalitarian, and sustainable.

All we need is the freedom to experiment without constraint. Freeing oneself from an irrational belief in our need for authority, whether it be divine or political, seems like a good place to start.

—Ian L.

Cul de Sac

Are we in a hopeless dead-end?



Assembly line, Ford Rouge plant, Dearborn, Mich. —Buster Brown

Le Garçon Dupont

FE Note: Usually, Fifth Estate essays are filled with the vision that alternatives exist to our current predicament. This article explores the possibility that humanity has already been extinguished and that there may be no hope of fashioning a different world. If that's the case, do we just cease our resistance? Comments welcome.

When many of the original people who inhabited Australia realised that their culture was being wiped out, they refused the entreaties of anthropologists and took their knowledge with them when they died.

They knew the world was being changed, that human things were being snuffed out in favour of a new, anti-human form of social organisation. To enable the survival of an empty culture, one with form, but no content, would be an absurdity, they reasoned.

Their culture would become an academic product, an ideological or political product, and a product for sale. The heroes who took their knowledge with them may not have articulated this possibility in the way I just have, but they knew it. Their intelligence far outstripped the intelligence of those kind anthropological scientists who blew in on a blood-soaked breeze.

Their intelligence was greater, but in this battle between two forms of social organisation, their power was less. They were strong enough to be still and quiet in the last breaths of their community when they could have been remembered and celebrated in the new culture as the last of the true people. They

knew their words and knowledge, if spoken out loud, would be put on show, or worse would be misunderstood. In the face of circumstances that were consuming them, they remained tight-lipped.

When I speak about the original inhabitants of Australia, I mean all people across the world who lived in pre-civilisation societies. In its most basic definition civilisation means living in cities, and the best definition of civilisation is a society organised by the power residing in cities.

Other definitions of the word civilisation, for example, one where it is defined in opposition to "savage," or "primitive," only strengthens the validity of the above definition. Civilisation has only occurred whenever city power has arisen.

The civilisation we live under today is global with one economic system. This system is capitalism; it is a perfected form of civilisation.

The formal definition of Capital (the root word of capitalism) is wealth available for use in the production of further wealth.

Wealth is all goods and services which have monetary or productive value.

Productive means producing goods and services that have exchange value.

Exchange means to hand over goods in return for the equivalent value in kind or the representation of its value.

The key phrase here is *exchange value*. What things in this world have exchange value? It is disconcerting when you realise that the only useful part of you is that which can be sold or made part of an economy. Have I really exchanged my time and effort, *my life*, for the dubious pleasure of continuing to survive?

Ah, but, we are no longer tied to an endless search for food and shelter; we can rest and relax. We have our time after work, our weekends, our retirement. It is in these moments that we can do exactly as we please and pursue our own idle pleasures; listen to music, play computer games, carve wood or go camping. Life is not as hard as it once was.

HOWEVER, HISTORY TELLS US that most mediaeval European serfs only worked for two-thirds of the year and that pre-civilisation humans generally lived in a state of relative abundance.

When the aboriginal people of Australia met the Europeans, they had no concept of work. They did not understand when Europeans told them that if they did tasks for them they would be paid in food or other items. They could not make the connections underlying the system of economic exchange.

Why are we led to believe that the past was a place of hardship and travail? Maybe it is because there was indeed one period of history that fitted that description, but it is quite recent.

My mother and father lived through the end of this period; they saw the world change from one of genuine struggle to survive, to one where survival was assured. This period lasted from the end of mediaeval times to the years immediately after the Second World War. This is the period that encompasses The Industrial Revolution and world colonisation, and was the time during which the modern economy, capitalism, established itself and refined its operations.

People of my age grew up being told that we were getting everything on a platter, and we heard the stories of hardship

from our parents. We grew up thinking that the past was hard and uncomfortable. Maybe this is why we think that progress, in general terms, is a good thing.

All societies are determined by the way people "make a living" In pre-civilisation societies that living was directly connected to the land. In modern society we all make a living by serving some function in the economy, for which we are paid money. Once we have this money we are able to buy what we need to live.

Capitalism, which has replaced all other modes of living, is an economic system that has reached so deeply into the heart of humankind that it is able to recreate itself automatically within the mind, brain and creative impulse of human beings. Our economic system is based on the large-scale brutalism which resulted in the success of the Industrial Revolution, combined with the brutalism which resulted in the successful spread of this single economic system to all parts of the world. In this massive process of revolutionising the way the world works, we have also changed as human beings.

When rural workers were forced from the land to work in the factories of Europe and North America, they were physically and emotionally shocked at the new work routines they encountered. They fought these new regimes by not coming to work. By breaking machines. They would claim spurious Holy Days as justifications for a sleep in and a day off. Such obstruction could not be allowed to continue, so life in the factories became more authoritarian and brutal.

This new regime for living spread beyond the workplace. When pre-civilisation people were used in factory situations in new empires across the globe, they simply died from the trauma of it. In Medieval Europe, ordinary people worked far less than we do now. They would be aghast at how little we know of the land, and how much of our time we spend working for faceless others. They would understand, however, why we are consumed by stress and mental illness. We are not the same people that our distant ancestors were. The survivors amongst us are harder, we glint, like steel. We have lost our sensitivity, our kindness.

In pre-civilisation times, the occupants of the land travelled and exchanged tools and artifacts across the continents and beyond. This was a kind of economy, but it in no way resembles the one under which the world lives today. The point of what was done in a pre-civilisation society was to reproduce the human community in which the people lived.

The capital of this society (and any pre-civilisation society) is the human being. It is the human being that is recreated and reproduced. In modern society we live under an economy which only reproduces humans as a bi-product.

What is recreated and reproduced now is wealth, or capital.

Modern society is geared to recreate the wealth of *individuals*, business and corporations; while most other humans play only a part as small, interchangeable cogs in this process. Their part is equal to the materials or land used. Just like oil or land, most humans are now a commodity to be used in the re-creation of profit and wealth. Even those individuals who seem to benefit from great wealth are only part of a process in which they have also sold themselves. Like the rest of us, they are commodities too.

Humanity has lost its animal status, and this is not a good thing. All animals adapt to their environment in order to keep that environment healthy. Non-adaptation results in strange phenomena. It can result in massive population explosions, for example among rabbits introduced into Australia, or humans who have been divorced from the land and turned into the slaves of wages.

These population explosions are signs of non-suitability; they will be accompanied by massive, periodic epidemics, famines, and constant battle.

Humans are conscious beings; they are able to treat their own lives as an object, something they can consciously change and affect. They are therefore able to imagine possible futures and strive to achieve them. Their consciousness of the possibilities of their own existence gives them a practical, individual freedom.

This freedom is determined and restricted by material circumstances. In the present day, the activity of humans is bound within the parameters set by the way the economy is organized and the way that humans must secure a means of living. The activity of humans in the present day is, therefore, not free activity.

In pre-civilisation societies humans were also restricted in their ability to pursue free activity. They made their own history, their own lives, but within a certain framework. Their activity was not free either.

The human mind is a creature of the material circumstances it finds itself in.

Since humans are conscious of their activity and life (even if they are often misguided about what is really happening) they are able to stand apart from it. Unlike animals, which are defined largely by their activities, human activity is not what defines them. It is the consciousness of their activity which defines them.

The chances they have to change their way of living, however, are not to be found in their ideas because their ideas are always bound by the parameters determined by material circumstance. The only successful genuine revolutionary event that has been well documented is the revolution from the Medieval mode of production to the Capitalist mode of production. Capitalism was a burgeoning economic force, which was already superseded-



"I Am For Sale"—a scene of desperation from the 1930s, but our labor is always a commodity to be bought and sold.

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BY MICHAEL GURNOW

"The Folly of Beginning a Work Before We Count the Cost"

Anarcho-Primitivism
in Daniel Defoe's
Robinson Crusoe

"YOU DON'T OWN PROPERTY; PROPERTY OWNS YOU."
TREASURE OF SIERRA MADRE —B. TRAVEN

Anarcho-primitivism states that humanity's problems began once we abandoned our hunter-gatherer lifestyle in favor of an agrarian one. By contrast, our new sedentary way of life leads to social stratification and overpopulation due to a division of labor and food commodities being produced to the point of surplus.

Newfound labor-intensive activities restricted our leisure time thereby increasing stress. Physical health declined when nutritional diversity was forsaken for food bearing the highest yield, which—for the first time in our history—allowed for the possibility of mass starvation via crop and/or herd failure. Population expansion forced us to begin living apart from our natural environment, i.e. in urban habitats.

Due to close proximity and the demand for frequent long-distance travel, disease became prevalent. We not only forgot how to be self-sufficient but became dependent on technology. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Sigmund Freud argues that this superficial domestication within an artificial construct created a mass pathology, as evidenced by the presence of large-scale warfare.

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* depicts this anthropological causation. Defoe presents a character that is divested of civilization and summarily benefits—physically, psychologically, emotionally, and morally—as he is forced to live a primitive existence. Sadly, then he makes the decision to replicate his lost culture and begins to suffer from many of the same ailments which he experienced prior to his separation from modern society.

When *Robinson Crusoe* is first cast ashore, on a remote tropical island near Venezuela, he worries whether he can survive. His fear is justified because, due to specialization, he does not possess the skills to be self-sustaining. He knows nothing of how to construct a shelter or identify wild edibles. Only with the aide of a firearm and a naïve attitude toward the dangers of tropical water, does he progress through his first year.

By the commencement of his second year on the island, *Crusoe* has not only built a "castle," but one replete with rafters, a thatched roof, shelving, two entrances, and a cellar. He fashions a table and chair along with various tools, such as a shovel and makeshift wheelbarrow. Through trial-and-error, he renders tallow from goat fat and crafts candles as well as a lamp. He learns to process food (dried grapes). Within the ensuing decade, he masters pottery, discovers the secrets of baking, builds two boats, constructs a Dutch oven, teaches himself the art of basket weaving, and successfully tans hides and tailors his own clothing.

Crusoe is pleasantly surprised that his needs are not only met, but surpassed by the island's resources; "I possessed infinitely more than I knew what to do with." He does become seriously ill shortly after his arrival but acute sickness is never mentioned again during his remaining 27 years on the island. This can be attributed to his heightened constitution, due not only to the nutritional diversity which the island affords—turtle, goat, fowl, hare, fish, eggs, and fruit, the latter in the form of grapes, melons, lemons, limes, and oranges—but his increased physical activity and improved mental health.

He hosts an almost perpetual sense of accomplishment atop being relieved of social and familial pressures, expectations, and demands. Once he establishes a routine by which to sustain his daily needs, he finds that he is in possession of ample leisure time, whereby he takes up the "hobbies" (by definition, enterprises which are not vital to survival) of woodworking (as opposed to carpentry), tailoring, pottery, baking, and basket weaving.

Civilization demands that humans gain and retain absolute control. This is achieved by the immediate environment being domesticated so it no longer poses a threat before it is exploited in order to better serve a populace. Once this is completed, any (perceived) dangers posited by fellow humans are addressed in a like manner. This totalitarian approach to existence is in contrast to organic integration. Anthropocentrism quickly transforms into ethnocentrism. Sadly, *Crusoe* begins replicating the civilization and society from which he has been cast.

HIS CIVILIZED TENDENCIES FIRST AFFECT only him. He observes that the climate does not require one to be clothed and, as we see with the aborigines of the region, is actually prohibitive. His decision to remain almost fully dressed heightens the risk of dehydration.

He erects a second shelter though he states he does so for aesthetic reasons. One could argue this is a preventative measure should something happen to his "castle" (as witnessed when an earthquake occurred and a hurricane struck the island during the first year), but *Crusoe*'s capricious want foreshadows his ensuing, and otherwise avoidable, grief.

During a week-long furlong to his second dwelling, he leaves a kid tethered at his "castle." The goat nearly dies of dehydration. Though the animal was not kept as food, this incident nevertheless presages the trials of animal husbandry, to which he will later devote himself. When he realizes that his gunpowder supply is diminishing, he begins utilizing traps and snares. However, shortly thereafter and believing such to be more economic, he builds a corral and proceeds to tame and breed goats.

Likewise, he "accidentally" (after disposing of what he thought were mere husks) sows barley (before adding rice to his crop). He then dedicates his energies to horticulture. Granted, agriculture offers him the possibilities of butter, bread, and

cheese, but it isn't necessary for survival and results in a master-slave relationship that, inevitably, will be conveyed to people.

Crusoe was contented—and survived—upon the island's resources, yet when he gains access to commodities which he prefers (as opposed to requires), he arbitrarily obligates himself: Not only must he plant, cultivate, and render seed, he has to feed, water, and supervise the goats and maintain their pen, atop crafting storage units.

In a survival situation, any unnecessary expenditure, especially ones which run the risk of injury (such as carpentry), is undeniably foolish. Though we could defend his decision to build a second shelter, few will argue that food storage isn't a luxury, especially when produce is available year-round, and—more importantly—rearing livestock is dangerous.

These stresses are compounded by the possibility of crop failure and livestock losses as leisure time summarily diminishes due to agricultural responsibilities. Moreover, these "conveniences" restrict Crusoe's naturally diversified diet.

CRUSOE'S MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL STRAIN is further exacerbated when he discovers a foreign footprint in the sand. After 15 years of having "nothing to covet," he fears that "[...] they [natives] [will] find my enclosure, destroy all my corn, and carry away all my flock of tame goats, and I should perish at last for mere want."

It is worthy to note that Crusoe refuses to acknowledge that, prior to his agricultural endeavors, a hunter-gatherer existence had sustained him and, thus, if such destruction were to occur, it would not result in his inevitable starvation. Upon finding the mysterious print, he spends three days in hiding and only reappears when he can no longer afford to neglect his goats. Had a threat been present, his arbitrary dependency upon livestock might have cost Crusoe his life.

He devotes the next two years to reinforcing his "castle" and, to better veil his herd, builds another corral further into the island, all while abstaining from fire craft or engaging in any leisure activities for fear of being discovered.

At the heart of Crusoe's paranoia lies his residual culturally-induced imperialism: Aware that other individuals might manifest themselves as a potential society, he claims private ownership. He believes a hierarchy must necessarily exist—of which, he presumes he naturally resides at its apex—and, ergo, that others will desire what he "owns" as a consequence, so much so that he lives in crippling fear for almost a decade.

Whereas, he once rejoiced that, "I was removed from all the wickedness of the world here; I had neither the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, nor the pride of life," when the mere thought of a society presents itself, it all returns.

His propriety over objects and animals quickly metamorphoses into domestication and ownership of people. Once more, this is merely an extension of one of civilization's creeds: A person must control one's surroundings.

He subsequently rescues a Caribbean native from being cannibalized—not on moral grounds—but because Crusoe is in need of additional labor. Unnecessary augmenting the island's population puts both parties at risk of contracting disease and is a mortal liability for Crusoe given that the new arrival is a cannibal.

Crusoe's apprehension is evident in his forcing the aborigine to sleep outside the "castle's" fortifications. In hopes of subduing the threat, he neutralizes the native by eradicating his identity.

Crusoe issues him an English title, "Friday" (thus depriving him of his given name), Christianizing him (negating his religion), and—perhaps paradoxically—assimilating him to European customs (dispossessing him of his culture) the exact process slaves exerted over their captives.

A further irony is that Crusoe was once enslaved yet regards and treats Friday as ethnically subservient, as epitomized by Crusoe's insistence that Friday refer to him as "Master." Crusoe proceeds to rescue others and tyrannize them, i.e., a Spanish refugee is described as "my [Crusoe's] Spaniard."

Crusoe eventually sends out a rescue mission and, in preparation for greater numbers returning, he expands crops, domesticates more goats, dries additional grapes, and weaves extra baskets in order to transport a greater amount of goods. Before the mission's return, mutineers dock and are quelled. After subverting them, since they too are products of specialization, he teaches five of the insurgents agriculture before leaving them the island.

Years later, he returns to find the island's population so great (children are now present after women were brought from the mainland) that he designates private plots for each of its residents. (The irony is that he postpones his return to the island, in part, due to owning a Brazilian plantation which he cannot personally oversee besides fretting about the security of his money while abroad.) Not only does he compound the dilemma by adding two workmen to the colony (growing numbers necessitate the arrival of technology in the form of a blacksmith), but he sends for more supplies and women from Brazil and England.

Of these goods, cows and hogs are included, which implies that he believes (and perhaps rightfully so by this time), that the island cannot—or will not in the near future—naturally sustain its human population.

AS WITH HIS REQUEST FOR BRAZILIAN WOMEN, bringing foreign fauna to the island runs the risk of importing disease which could result in the demise of the island's indigenous livestock and, conversely, introduce the new fauna to native illness.

Thus, if—for whatever reason—the island's populace had to resort to a hunter-gatherer existence, Crusoe's induction of civilization, especially in the guise of agriculture, might inhibit survival because the islanders' unregulated numbers are now dependent upon set yields (war, the consequence of class division and/or hubris, ruined a previous year's crops), the native habitat may be unable to support present numbers, and/or the island's ecosystem might be compromised.

When Robinson Crusoe first arrives on the island, he adopts anarcho-primitivist principles and soon finds himself happier than he had ever been. Unfortunately, he decides to abide by the dictums of civilization and, as a result, his newfound contentment promptly vanishes.

Though for many years his ensuing discomfort is singular and self-inflicted, he departs from the island after instilling its remaining members with the ideals which deprived him of a rewarding existence. The inevitable consequence is that the island's inhabitants will not be afforded the life which Crusoe once enjoyed nor will the island be able to sustain its populace as it once had.

The Politics of Carnival



Festivals Medieval & Modern that Slip Out of Control

Since the early 1980s, there has been a bit of an academic cottage industry largely concerned with Mikhail Bakhtin's book, *Rabelais and His World*, and the interpretation of medieval carnival and festive misrule.

Bakhtin famously described "the life of the carnival square, free and unrestricted, full of ambivalent laughter, blasphemy, the profanation of everything sacred, full of debasing and obscenities, familiar contact with everyone and everything." Festive misrule then is the inversion permitted during a carnival, the license to swear, drink, criticize the elite of church and society, break social norms, to take green boughs and maypoles off of church or noble land, mumming and various plays and games (often with comic elements criticizing gentry and church) cross dressing and so on.

The list could literally go on for pages. There is ample evidence for the existence of festive misrule, what is at debate is its function and consequences. The debate is between people who see carnival as conservative, that it lets off steam and preserves social cohesion, and Bakhtin and many others who see carnival as subversive.

This debate is interesting, but not necessarily as important as it is to those involved. I want carnival to have had (and continue to have) a mostly subversive function. But even if it doesn't I'm not heartbroken. Firstly, I think misrule, play, celebration, all these things are intrinsically valuable in and of themselves.

So, even if a French peasant, or an English commoner, never took part in a conspiracy or insurrection against the nobles, at least they told them to fuck off several times a year (there were a lot of carnivals and celebrations), played at Robin Hood, danced, drank and had a good time. Also, even if carnival and festive misrule was usually a conservative force in society (and I'm not conceding that it was), it wasn't always.

There are a lot of examples of carnival getting out of hand. Sometimes a little out of hand, like the Edinburgh riots in 1561. Despite prohibitions against traditional games including the election of Robin Hood and Maid Marion, a tailor was nonetheless elected Robin Hood. He led a riot and was dubbed by his mock subjects Lord of Inobedience. They smashed things up and got arrested.

Twelve years earlier in England, things got a lot out of hand when Robert Kett helped transform a summer game into insurrection. "Kett held parliament beneath a ceremonial oak tree. His followers carried green boughs to recognize each other. The symbolic language of game became the language of rebellion" (Wiles).

Kett's followers defeated an army of 14,000 before later being defeated by an even larger army. I would say that was well out of hand! There are suggested connections between the burning of festive bonfires and the origins of the 1381 peasants uprising in England.

E. Le Roy Ladurie chronicles one of the bloodiest uprisings in France prior to the 1789 revolution, in his *Carnival: A People's Uprising in Romans 1579-80*. The conflict was long in duration and was put down with extreme force, and it had its origins in carnival. Natalie Zemon Davis presents a huge list of such events in her wonderful essay, "The Reasons of Misrule." More than anything else I would recommend reading this relatively short essay.

By the politics of carnival, I mean the insurrectionary potential latent in carnival, but also the contestation of the meaning of carnival. The contestation of meaning in history is political and it has real relevance to struggles today. I also mean something quite separate from these debates over events often hundreds of years in the past.

The phrase "the politics of carnival" also brings to mind the struggle for joy and celebration in our lives today. Carnival is political today because political oppression involves the imposition of misery. To affirm joy in our lives, to truly have something to celebrate, is to deny the passive consumerism of this society and the "safety" of the police state.

New Orleans Mardi Gras, the real unofficial one, is not safe, not completely. It is not well managed, or carefully controlled. It is chaotic and organic and joyous, and it can have a dark side. Affirming joy means taking chances. Some say that revolution is the carnival of the oppressed. To this we might answer that carnival is the carnival of the oppressed.

That we believe that joy is subversive and that we affirm pleasure and laughter and eros; that we hate this death culture and its misery and work, factories and war, sitcoms and mediation. Simulations of joy and laughter, but real prisons and real death.

Carnival is political where it is contested, and that is not just in the halls of academia. The meaning of carnival is up for grabs all over the place, most of all the streets. In New Orleans, Mardi Gras means gentrification,

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CUBA: From State to Private Capitalism

ADIOS, SOCIALISMO

WALKER LANE reports from Havana



Musicians perform "Guantanamera," a tourist favorite, for guests at Havana's El Nacional hotel

We entered the elevator on the ground floor of Havana's renowned FOCSA building in the city's Vedado district and were quickly whisked, non-stop, to the 32nd floor. When the doors opened, tuxedoed waiters welcomed us to La Torre, an elegant, candle-lit restaurant with floor to ceiling windows overlooking the city and harbor twinkling in the night below us.

"Damn," I thought, "if the communists come back, we're screwed."

Of course, they never left, but the incongruity of eating an expensive meal (by Cuban standards) in opulent circumstances seemingly contradicts the island's slogan of "Socialism or Death," but it actually neatly sets the context for what may be the country's future.

Also, if you happened to be one of the "Ladies in White," who were recently protesting the imprisonment of their dissident husbands, brothers, and sons, you also realized that the communists are no more tolerant of opposition than they have been in the past. [See Page 26 for more on this.]

Dinner at an improbably elegant restaurant occurred on the final night of my third trip to Cuba with a Toronto-based tour group. After having previously traveled with them to the eastern and western sectors of the 700-mile long island, this trip featured a week in the nation's capital. I was the only Ameri-

can among 25 Canadians, mostly professionals in social services who were anxious to see how their Cuban counterparts work in related fields of medicine, social work, juvenile crime, women's issues, etc.

I am able to circumvent the U.S. blockade which prohibits Americans from going to the island by an exclusion from the law allowing journalists to travel there. [More on this at the end.]

Through fortuitous occurrences, I wound up with accommodations at the *Hotel Nacional de Cuba*, an historic luxury hotel located on the Malecón, the broad esplanade, roadway, and seawall that runs along Havana harbor.

The building's lobby and rooms are so steeped in Cuba's pre-Revolutionary history that one can almost feel the presence of the multitude of American gangsters, movie stars, athletes, writers, and corporate managers who lodged there during their stay in the corrupt Latin playground for the wealthy. Some of the rooms are even named after the famous, such as the "Frank Sinatra and Ava Gardner Room," which a couple from our group was able to score.

Foreign investment,
tourism, & class
stratification,
alter the nature of
Cuban Society

Stories set in the Nacional fill books, but one hit me particularly as I was reading *The Mafia in Havana* by Enrique Cirules during my stay. The tripartite ruling powers of the island from the 1930s through to the 1959 revolution were the Mob, U.S. intelligence agencies, and American corporations, all abetted by the criminal state whose last president was Fulgencio Batista.

In 1946, the U.S. mob called a summit meeting, convened by Lucky Luciano in Havana, to decide how to split up the American rackets and the newly expanding ones in Cuba. They reserved all of the Nacional's 500 rooms for their meetings, and were met by chauffeured limousines at the airport to transport them to the hotel.

The gangsters' first big meal at the Nacional consisted of grilled manatee, roast flamingo, and turtle. From then until they were run off the island in 1959, the Mob increased its revenues as it expanded into casinos, hotels, and entertainment, much of it connected with Hollywood stars such as George Raft and Sinatra.

As on my other visits, we were bussed around by an able crew of guides and interpreters to local projects that showed the ingenuity and spirit of a people living under great economic and political stress. City residents reacted to us like the tourists we were and none offered political opinions. They were pleased, however, to show us their projects.

TWO MONUMENTS

Of the many monuments that dot Havana neighborhoods, two in particular often surprise visitors. One is a memorial commemorating Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, convicted of passing atomic secrets to the Soviet Union, and executed following a judicial farce. The words on it read, "For Peace Bread And Roses We Will Face The Executioner. Ethel And Julius Rosenberg. Assassinated June 19, 1953."

The other is a life-size statue of Beatle John Lennon sitting on a bench in a park named for him. At his feet is the inscription in Spanish, "You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one," from the song "Imagine." The Beatles were banned

from Cuban airwaves from 1964-66 when the government promoted indigenous music as revolutionary. The statue was unveiled in 2000 with Fidel Castro in attendance.



All photos: Walker Lane

Cuban musicians perform in Havana's Cathedral Square for an audience of young students

For instance, at the Organopónico Vivero Alamar, on the outskirts of Havana, the director and several workers proudly explained how the vast urban gardens on Havana's outskirts, of which this was one component, provided the majority of the city's vegetables. Many of the workers were retirees from other sectors of the economy and used their labor at the farm to supplement their pensions and to continue as part of the social fabric of the area.

Workers are paid wages by the state and the farm has a small retail outlet for local consumption.

Back in the city, we took a walking tour of Old Havana, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with its restored colonial buildings housing museums, shops, and restaurants which mostly cater to tourists. It is here that one encounters panhandlers and scam artists not usually seen elsewhere on the island.

In Cathedral Square, where mostly Canadian and European tourists congregate to drink *mojitos*, smoke *Cohibas*, and take in the sights, it occurred to me that if Americans were permitted to visit, which looks like it may happen soon, there would have been thousands of people in the square rather than hundreds. One thing glaringly missing are the normally ubiquitous signs with revolutionary implorations for socialism that are present everywhere else in the city, so as perhaps not to offend the capitalist sentiments of visitors.

In a corner of the square, four elderly Cuban men were playing and singing traditional island songs. Suddenly, a group of school children rushed up and stared at the music makers for a second, and then began enthusiastically singing along with them, obviously familiar with the song. Wow, I thought, there's still a traditional folk culture here that hasn't been superseded by the global industrial music machine.

However, later that night, still in the Old City, we witnessed the *Cañonazo*, the Cannon Blast ceremony, a tradition dating from the Spanish colonial days, when shots were fired signaling the closing of the gates of the walled city and the raising of the chain across the entrance to the harbor. The tradition of firing a cannon every night

Continued on Page 27

State Violence

& Cuba's Ladies in White

In March, Cuban police broke up a protest by the Ladies in White, women with family members sentenced to prison for opposing the government. The images of the women being dragged to a bus, their white clothes smeared with mud, were broadcast world-wide as proof of the repressive nature of the Castro government.

The women's action was instigated by the death of a well known imprisoned dissident, Orlando Zapata Tamayo, who had been on a hunger strike since December.

News reports stated that as many as 30 women marched through Havana's Parraga neighborhood with 200 government supporters following them, shouting, "Worms, get out of here. Viva, Fidel! Viva, Raul."

According to news reports, as the pro-government crowd became more menacing, state security agents repeatedly offered to take the Ladies in White away, but when they refused, the women were shoved and pulled into a bus and driven to the leader of the group's house.

In Miami, a week later, newspapers reported, "Tens of thousands of Cuban exiles wearing white, and carrying gladioluses and flags marched for blocks along Calle Ocho with singer Gloria Estefan in support of Cuba's *Damas de Blanco*, Ladies in White..."

The Cuban Commission for Human Rights estimates there are currently 180 political prisoners on the island. The government brands all dissidents as disloyal and agents of the U.S.

Given the nature of attacks on demonstrators by police around the world, it is surprising that the Cuban response was as mild as it was. Often public protests there can land participants in prison. The Ladies in White marched again in Havana at the same time as the Cubans in Miami, and are now permitted to march.

Media response to this incident ignores the fact that all governments are repressive; some less than others; some more, but all worthy of condemnation.

A slogan often seen posted on walls

throughout Cuba is true for all governments: "With the Revolution: Everything; Against the Revolution: Nothing." Just substitute "Government" for "Revolution" and you have the motto of all nation states.

How brittle a particular government's rule is determines how it reacts to those who act "against" their power prerogative.



Civilian Cuban women aid state security agents by dragging Ladies In White to an awaiting bus following an Havana anti-government march.

tives. Countries with formal democratic rule usually permit a great deal of political latitude (for instance, publishing this magazine). That is, until the rulers feel threatened by what they have allowed. And, even when their rule is not directly at risk, power often reacts reflexively to quash dissent.

The U.S. regularly criticizes Cuba for its repressive measures and prison conditions which bolsters the mythology believed by so many citizens here about this nation as America the Good. But, this is a state of wilful ignorance.

Police in the U.S. routinely attack peaceful demonstrators, often carrying out mass arrests as evidenced by the level of force used against protests at recent political party conventions. Going back a generation, National Guard and police shot student demonstrators to death on several occasions, plus killed dozens of Black Panther Party members. Further back in U.S. history, cops, and soldiers murdered hundreds of union members and

labor organizers between 1870 and 1950.

During World War I, civil liberties took such a hit in the U.S. that the Wilson administration made that of George W. Bush seem eligible for ACLU membership by comparison. During World War II, it was concentration camps for Japanese, but not for German-Americans.

Cuban prison conditions are rightly criticized for their harshness and squalor, these definitions equally describe those of the U.S. as well. Plus, the increasing use in the U.S. of private contractor prisons and horrid conditions in immigration detention centers, make a mockery of American claims to criticize Cuba.

Add to this, U.S. secret torture sites, Abu Ghraib, and Bagram in Afghanistan, and one sees a discernible pattern, but one usually ignored beneath a wall of national self-righteousness.

By combing the back pages of the few newspapers that still report international news, one can note the frequency of police attacks on peaceful protests in other countries, often with deadly results. When massive violation of civil liberties, routine torture, and brutal attacks on demonstrators occur in countries such as Israel and Egypt, staunch U.S. allies and recipients of billions in taxpayer dollars, the incidents rarely rise to the level of concern or criticism by either politicians or the media. Israel's cruel wars or its May 31 massacre at sea are exceptions.

But to be clear in the case of Cuba, all of its political prisoners should be released immediately and all Cubans should have the right of free expression. Obviously, some of the dissidents have right wing politics such as the ones who assembled at a 2005 protest in Havana, shouting, "Viva Bush." But among the 75 dissidents arrested in 2003, several of those related to Ladies in White were independent labor leaders who received outrageous prison terms.

It is important to oppose the repression carried out by the Cuban government, but it is equally important to not allow criticism of Cuba to act as a diversion from opposing what this country does here and abroad.

The Miami Cubans, for instance, would seem more credible if they were also critical of the abuses they condemn in the country in which they reside.

Only those who criticize *all* state violence deserve to be taken seriously,

—Walker Lane

Cuba in Transition

Continued from Page 25

at 9:00 pm has been maintained as a pageant even though the wall was torn down a hundred years ago. Re-enactment performers marched to the rampart and fired off the cannon to the delight of several thousand assembled Havaneros and a few dozen tourists.

As the dark encompassed the centuries old Morro Castle, we trekked back to our bus and came across about a hundred or more Cuban young people dancing wildly under a canopy. Upon listening, I realized it wasn't the Cuban rumba or cha-cha-cha animating them, but the music of the LA-based, hip-hop band, The Black Eyed Peas; the young people knew all the words and loudly sang the choruses in unison.

It's not news that American popular culture has become globalized to the point of total domination at the expense of other countries' traditional forms, but in Cuba, even a seemingly innocuous song can be seen as one of the many signals of re-penetration of U.S. capital. Washington and Wall Street have never given up their goals of moving the island back into its military and investment portfolios.

Such occurrences, even small ones, are usually hailed as signalling the end of a dour, authoritarian "failed state," one "stuck in the last century." Liberal critics, at least, are willing to allow that there are many admirable features on the island such as the always vaunted Cuban universal health care system and other state provided social services. The government's domination of most aspects of economic activity, to say nothing of its vice grip on the political apparatus, is something all critics agree is a vestige of another era, one long ready for "reforms" and "transition." Or, so goes the narrative by all but the most unreconstructed leftists who see little or nothing wrong with the current state of Cuban affairs, and are blind to the changes occurring.

Leaving aside the question of which nation, the U.S. or Cuba, suffers worse from a creaky bureaucracy, a repressive police apparatus, and more readily qualifies as a failed state, it's worth a look at what so-called reforms advocated for Cuba would look like. One only need recall the collapse of the Stalinist dictatorships in Eastern and Central Europe to realize how quickly the transition from state to private ownership can occur.

Are the former Soviet bloc people better off today? Probably not in Mother Russia from whence the state socialist forms were imposed on its satellite nations, but in many of the latter, life has improved for most, but certainly not all.

Most countries under Soviet domination had already achieved a status of modern industrial capitalist economies, so their transition back to private entrepreneurial economies wasn't difficult, particularly when Party bosses quickly grabbed the reins of the previously socialized enterprises.

Castro and his band wrenched an island with little modern infrastructure other than in big cities, an impoverished peasantry, and an economy looted and corrupted by foreign imperialists, gangsters, and domestic elites from the hands of U.S. corporate and military interests. Following the Revolution, attempts to

build a modern industrial economy under the auspices of the state, and now, increasingly utilizing the market, all the while surrounded by a hostile major power, has proved and continues to be daunting for the little island.

The results were and are a fragile state capitalist economy, albeit with equitable

forms of benefits for the population, and a rigid, authoritarian political command structure. There are more democratic modalities on a local level than is generally realized, but ultimately, policy is top down.

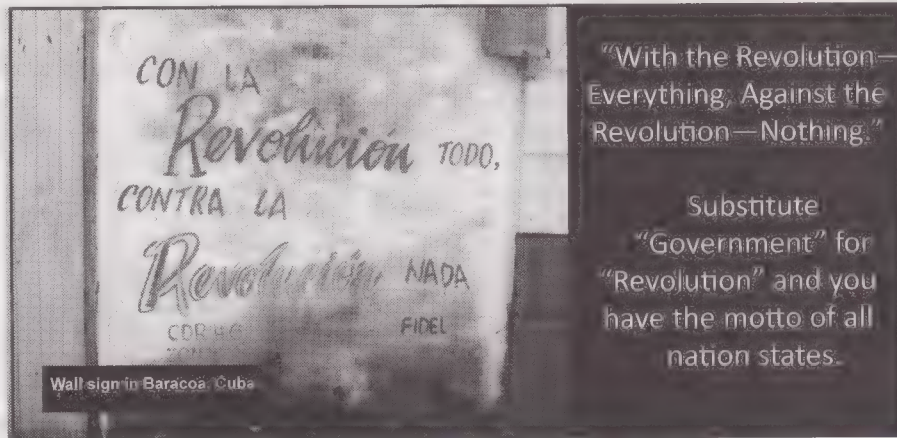
Recent media accounts celebrate that "[Cuban president] Raul Castro is trying to modernise the system without jumping to full-scale capitalism." This in a BBC News web site report about how Cuba is turning over hundreds of state-run barber shops and beauty salons to employees "in what may be the start of a long-expected privatisation drive."

The article notes that "other communist countries such as China and Vietnam have long since pushed through market reforms while maintaining political control." If those countries are a model, it's not much to look forward to for the Cuban people.

Cuba recently turned over a quarter million plots of unproductive state-owned land, laying fallow since mass sugar production ceased to private farmers. Some taxi drivers are allowed to work for themselves.

Some, anticipating the re-introduction of private capitalist forms, are almost delirious with anticipation. Timothy Ashby, an official in the Reagan and Bush, Sr. administrations, and a specialist in privatization issues, writing in *Travel Wire Industry*, says, "Cuba is positioning itself for a China-style economic leap forward." The island, he writes, "remains a hugely untapped market of 11 million consumers."

So, it's, *adios, socialismo*, or, what passed for it. Ashby sees the lifting of the 50-year American trade and travel embargo as benefiting the economies of both countries—creating a modern, efficient economic infrastructure for the island and a shot in the arm for the U.S.' beleaguered employment situation. He estimates "that lifting travel restrictions alone



"With the Revolution—
Everything. Against the
Revolution—Nothing."

Substitute
"Government" for
"Revolution" and you
have the motto of all
nation states.

would increase [U.S.] domestic output by between \$1.2 billion and \$1.6 billion annually, and create between 17,000 and 23,000 new jobs – yes, in tourism, but also in real estate, retail, food processing, transportation and associated sectors.” He further reports that the Cuban government, with foreign partners, is planning 14 new condominium and golf resorts, part of a new, massive tourist infrastructure.

“The same projections see U.S. airlines, cruise ships and tour operators generating more than \$522 million from Cuban trade add-ons in the first year alone, increasing to \$1.6 billion by the fifth year, and creating more than 10,000 jobs. An estimated 60 cents out of every dollar spent by Americans in Cuba reliably would end up back in the United States.”

This all has a familiar ring, doesn't it? It sounds just like the equation which immiserated the Cuban people during the period up until 1959. Cuba as the recreation zone for Americans

and others with the cash to vacation there while the people of the island will mix *mojitos* and make beds in resorts for them.

Definitely, the Mob won't be allowed back in, but the

The direction in which it looks like the Cuban government is headed will lead to the Jamaicaization of the island—another swell tourist destination.

other control sectors formerly excluded certainly will. But, what about the almost 6,000 American corporations and businesses the Cuban revolution nationalized for which the U.S. still demands compensation? Lawyer Ashby has a plan for that as well.

He writes, “American law requires that claims against Havana for 1960's-era U.S.-owned property that was seized, must be resolved before full relations can be re-established.”

So, the new Cuba will enter the modern capitalist world in debt to the corporate gangsters who looted the island unrestricted for years. Maybe Cuba could get an IMF loan to pay off its debt and impose a little austerity along the way as the bankers almost always demand.

Ashby is quite enthusiastic about the future “once American visitors descend on the island.” And, descend they will just like before and just like they do on other Caribbean island resorts, Jamaica, perhaps being the best comparison..

As I noted in the Summer 2008 Fifth Estate article about another Cuba trip, “Socialism or Cell Phones,” there is a growing class of Cubans with disposable incomes thirsting for all of the technological gadgets and fashion available to modern citizens. The process Ashby advocates and the direction in which it looks like the Cuban government is headed will lead to the Jamaicaization of the island—another swell tourist destination.

But, there's no reason to think that the rising class stratification won't also produce the worse elements of Kingston which in late May necessitated a state of emergency declared by the Jamaican government following clashes between police and heavily armed *narcotraficantes* which left 30 people dead. A lot like that other bastion of tourism and democracy—Mexico. Right now, Cuba has none of that.

In a new, reformed Cuba, IMF-imposed austerity would

undoubtedly mean that the extensive social services extended to all citizens will disappear, as would state subsidies. Currently, prices for most basics, such as food and housing, are now subsidized or very cheap.

For instance, at Havana's famed *Heladería Coppelía*, a solid block of ice cream shops, a 4-scoop sundae costs about 20 cents in the local currency, but often entails a 45-minute wait. Fast service is available using CUCs, the tourist money, but the cost soars to \$3-4. The same is true for venues such as the Morro Castle where *cañochoza* takes place, which also has two-tier pricing. No one goes without on the \$20 guaranteed monthly income the U.S. media never fails to mention as proof of how poor the country is.

Much of the social services operate at a local and neighborhood level. We visited a *Casa de Orientación a la Mujer y la Familia*, a center for the guidance of women and the family, where support and information are supplied. The all-women staff explained the programs that deal with women's issues including health and violence in the family. Cuban television airs ads against family violence which they define, besides the obvious, as the withholding of affection.

In a Mother's Day Index, the international charity, Save the Children, rated Cuba, among less-developed nations, as the best place to be a mother based on access to education, jobs, and health care for women and children. By contrast, the U.S. came in 28th on the index of developed nations.

The week visiting Havana was exhausting with days filled with stops such as at the Antonio Núñez Jiménez Foundation for Nature and Humanity, founded by the cartographer for Castro's rebel band. It is in the forefront of creating sustainable development and ecological consciousness which probably puts it at odds with the planned centralized official vision.

A trip to development centers for children, the “House of Grandmothers,” and neighborhood community centers, demonstrated a highly organized society. How much of it serves the political apparatus is a separate but important question.

We also were guests at a moving ceremony recognizing the 20th anniversary of Cuba's treatment of victims of the Chernobyl nuclear accident. Up to 800 children at a time from Ukraine, many with crippling conditions still being caused by radiation poisoning, were present in their wheelchairs. The Ukrainian ambassador to Cuba spoke and entertainment was provided by La Colmenita, a Cuban children's ensemble who played and sang as well as any adult group. The songs were all traditional.

A trip to one of the poorer barrios brought us to the Muraldo Cultural Project where local artists have festooned the neighborhood with wall murals and sculptures created from cast off junk. Some of it was reminiscent of Detroit's Heidelberg Project which also makes art from society's detritus. One mural featured quotes from American socialist and labor leader, Eugene V. Debs.

After three visits to the island, one of my friends remarked that I'm “getting soft on Cuba.” I definitely am, but towards its people, certainly not its government.

Even as the rulers act like bosses and cops, there are many Cubans who take the island's official ideology of socialism and creating a new world seriously. Their results are in the many scattered exciting projects in education, music, art, ecology, science, culture, agriculture, and other endeavors that in many

ways we mirror in our small efforts in this country.

However, the small projects we found admirable are a weak bulwark against the massive economic forces howling at Cuba's door. It is much more likely, sad to say, that the island's future is already determined by its re-integration into global capital. And, perhaps it is a mistake to suggest that the island's economy has previously been independent of global economic forces. From the misery engendered by Columbus' visit which presaged the arrival of the Spaniards and slavery, through the island's colonial period, its domination by the U.S., and then its dependence on the Soviet Union, Cuba has had little capacity for self-reliance.

Since the early 1990s, following the Soviet Union's collapse, increasingly the island's economy has been based around tourism and foreign investment. Even with the U.S. trade embargo in place, Cuba still imports hundreds of millions of dollars worth of American goods yearly. The dinner I ate at La Torre had as its main course fish imported from Canada.

Octavio Alberola, active with GALSIC (Support Group for Libertarians and Independent Trade Unionists in Cuba), a support and information network, and the Cuban Libertarian Movement in Exile (MLCE), remains a steadfast opponent of the Castro government. In an interview with the Kate Sharpley Library available on line, he recognizes there is little or nothing

left in Cuba today of the organized anarchist workers movement that Castro ruthlessly suppressed.

This publication desires, as I assume most readers do—a Cuba which experiences a real revolution that abolishes all forms of capitalism, private and state, and the government apparatus along with it which is what anarchists have always fought for. We should support our Cuban comrades when possible, but I doubt if their day is near.

I checked out of the Nacional at 6am, boarded a Chinese-made Yutong bus and roared across the Cuban countryside to Varadero 90 miles away to catch a plane for Toronto. Sixteen hours later, I was crossing the border from Windsor, Ontario to Detroit, arriving at a snow covered customs booth staffed by grim faced, heavily armed border guards at the ready.

Been to Cuba? Out of the car. You've violated the terms of the Cuban Assets Control Regulations.

I'm a journalist qualified to travel there. I write about the island as well as do radio broadcasts about my visits.

You don't qualify. Empty your pockets. Get up against the wall. Spread your legs.

I bet you don't do this to reporters from NBC.

You'll hear from the Treasury Department.

Welcome home.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS FOR NEXT ISSUE

FIFTH ESTATE #384 Winter 2011

Theme: "DIY: Culture, Ethics, Aesthetics"

Maybe the most persistent of all forms of external authority in our lives are the day-to-day tyrannies of specialists and experts. The Fifth Estate's next issue investigates strategies of resistance to and liberation from this insidious system of technocratic mystification and domination with a look at the culture, ethics, and aesthetics of do-it-yourselfism.

Is DIY a creator-centered cultural activity intended to build a community? Or, is it self-centered and self-serving? Is it subversive intervention or counter-cultural lifestyle? Is it political, apolitical, or antipolitical? What are the relationships between do-it-yourselfist practice, radical free expression, creativity, and pleasure? Is DIY the cornerstone of autonomy?

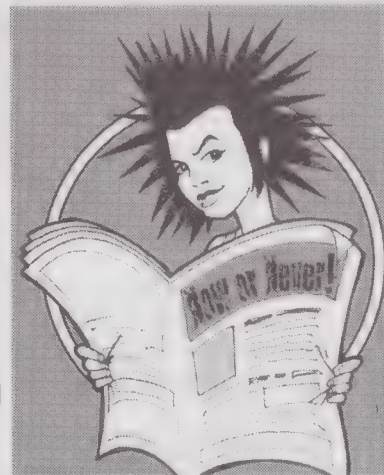
Other possible topics may include:

- folk knowledge, informal learning spaces, mutual aid skill-sharing
- guerrilla arts-'n'-crafts
- homespun alternatives to mass production & consumption
- participatory journalism & pirate broadcasting
- outsider art, lo-fi music, folk architecture
- wildcat communal clusters, squats, & intentional communities
- raves, Reclaim the Street parties, Critical Mass swarms, flash-mobs, guerrilla gigs
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- the histories & futures of DIY

Please submit manuscripts for short pieces and proposals for longer essays, along with graphics and photographs to: fe@fifthestate.org or FIFTH ESTATE, POB 201016, Ferndale, MI 48220

Deadline: SEPTEMBER 1

Publication date: OCTOBER 15



Marie Mason Update:

Denied a vegan diet; Appeals Continue

As BP continues to devastate the Gulf of Mexico for generations to come, militant eco-radicals like Marie Mason, who have dedicated their lives to halting exactly this kind environmental destruction, helplessly watch from inside the dungeons of the State.

Mason is serving almost 22 years for two acts of environmentally-motivated property destruction, the longest sentence of any Green Scare prisoner. The Green Scare is the name given to the recent slate of prosecutions of radical environmental and animal liberation activists. Her sentence is under appeal.

Mason is adjusting to life in the Waseca federal correctional institution, a minimum-security women's prison in Minnesota, and is currently fighting to receive vegan meals. She is vegan for a combination of ethical, religious (Tibetan Buddhist), and medical reasons.

The Waseca warden, Nicole English, a recent transfer from the Marion, Illinois Super-Max prison, has refused to provide vegan options. As a result of trying to make do with available non-animal products in prison, Mason has been suffering ill-health, including dizziness and extreme pain in her hands. She is currently appealing the denial, but an error in the process has set her back several steps.

Mason loves to get letters, but can only write to a pre-approved list of 100 people. However, she can receive letters from anyone, and her supporters are encouraged to hold letter-writing nights and benefit performances for her. There have been recent benefits for her in Nashville, Minneapolis, and Eugene, Oregon.

Donations are urgently needed to provide Mason with vegan meals in prison; to buy phone time so that she can speak with her children; and to pay for the appeal process. They can be sent directly to her mother, Karin Mason, at PO Box 352, Stanwood, MI 49346.

For more information on how to support Marie see, www.supportmariemason.org or back FE issues at our web site.

Write to her at: Marie Mason #04672-061, FCI Waseca, P.O. Box 1731, Waseca, MN 56093

RNC Update:

Judge rules trumped up charges from 2008 Republican convention can proceed

The RNC 8 are preparing for trial following hearings to dismiss felony charges against them stemming from planned demonstrations at the 2008 Republican National Convention (RNC). The eight activists were preemptively arrested before the convention in St. Paul, Minnesota, some in raids by heavily armed SWAT teams. While the State dismissed terrorism counts last year, the defendants still face charges of conspiracy to riot with a dangerous weapon and conspiracy to commit criminal damage to property.

In the May and June hearings, the defendants scored a small victory when the presiding judge granted a probable cause hearing to determine if the State has a solid enough case to proceed.

Key prosecution witnesses took the stand including Ramsey County Sheriff's investigators, Tony Samec and Jay Maher. Maher testified to crossing the country taking photos of RNC Welcoming Committee members as they attended meetings. His investigation even extended beyond the RNC, visiting the 2009 Pittsburgh G20 to photograph activists for an unknown "training" program.

These charges are an effort to equate publicly stated plans to blockade traffic and disrupt the RNC as being the same as acts of terrorism. "This both trivializes real violence and attempts to place the stated political views of the Defendants on trial," said Bruce Nestor, President of the Minnesota Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild. "The charges represent an abuse of the criminal justice system and seek to intimidate any person organizing large scale public demonstrations potentially involving civil disobedience," he said.

The State's investigation began in 2007 following the RNC Welcoming Committee's release of a satirical video "We're Getting Ready" (available on line at rnc08report.org/archive/403.shtml). After the trial date of October 25 was set this spring, the RNC 8 released another video spoof: "We're Getting Ready for Court" (also on one at rnc8.org).



"Not for Profit"

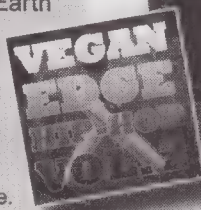
Songs to defend the Earth

Send remittance to Little Black Cart,
PO Box 3920, Berkeley CA 94703).

All proceeds go to Marie Mason
Defense Fund.

More info on CDs at freemarie.org
\$12 postpaid from Got Your Back Collective.
For downloadable zine, go to www.support-mariemason.org

Free Marie Merch



CD Sales to Benefit Marie

"Free Marie" T-shirts

Colors: Grey, Baby Blue, Pink with black
graphic and lettering.

Sizes Available - S, M, L, and XL

\$15 and \$2 for shipping.

Send check or money order (made out to
Books for Prisoners), or well concealed
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Got Your Back Collective

P.O.B. 10371

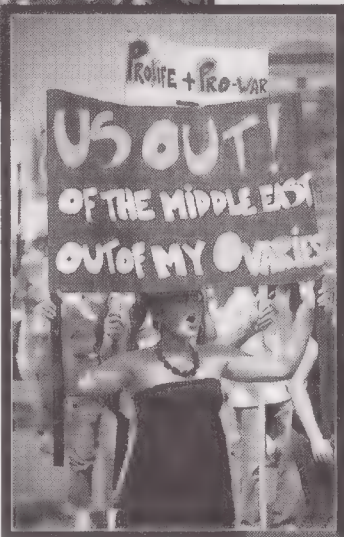
Columbus, OH 43201

Vegan Edge Hip Hop Vol. 2: World-wide vegan
hip hop artists. www.veganhiphop.org.

Peregrine/Auryn: Green Scare Benefit Split
Two Pittsburgh anarchist bands with a pur-
pose. www.myspace.com/peregrinemetal



Robo-cops ready for peaceful protesters. Below: a protester. —photos: Chad Davis



The State bases its prosecution in part on the “threats” in the original trailer such as a molotov cocktail being thrown into a barbecue grill. Several of the cops testified at the hearing to considering the video, played in open court, to be completely serious.

Searches conducted during the raids and arrests failed to turn up any physical evidence to support the allegations of organized attacks stated in the warrants. Although claiming probable cause to believe that gunpowder, acids, and assembled incendiary devices would be found, no such items were seized by police. As a result, police claim that the seizure of common household items such as glass bottles, charcoal lighter, nails, a rusty machete, and two hatchets, supported the allegations of the confidential informants that attacks were being planned.

Two of the paid police informants, Marilyn Hedstrom (aka “Norma Jean Johnson”) and Christopher Dugger were subpoenaed to testify. These undercover agents attended RNC Welcoming Committee meetings and events for a year, but could not remember specific plans made by any defendant to commit property damage or riot with a dangerous weapon. Their most frequent response was, “I don’t recall.”

The State won a few motions during the hearings. They were able to keep their paid FBI informant, Andrew Darst (aka “Panda”) off the stand for the probable cause hearing. Although Darst is still on the federal payroll, making \$1,500 every month, the government prevented the RNC defense from locating him to serve a subpoena.

The judge ruled that people detained and searched in the politically-motivated Convergence Center raid, from where many of the protests were launched, could not expect to be free of unreasonable searches and seizures, because they were in a place open to the public. The judge also denied motions to suppress evidence from the preemptive house raids. It seems like the judge needs a copy of the U.S. Constitution on his bench.

The RNC 8 continues to organize for justice and liberation, host community dinners and events, and defend other targets of state repression. They can use your support and donations. Visit RNC8.org for more info and to receive announcements.

Follow them on twitter @defendthernc8. And, look for them across the country this summer on the Conspiracy Tour: conspiracytour.wordpress.com.

Q&A with Dahr Jamail Resistance to Iraq war inside the military

The U.S. defeat in the Vietnam war can be attributed to many things including the American military’s inability to vanquish the National Liberation Front and the North Vietnamese Army on the battlefield despite killing three million Indochinese and destroying the country’s infrastructure, and the enormous and unprecedented domestic opposition to the war.

Perhaps as great as the other two factors combined, resistance to the point of mutinies within the services—in the field, aboard ships, and at military bases during the war sealed the fate of the almost ten year conflict.

At home, rather than the completely right wing myth, fabricated years after the conflict ended, of vets being spat upon, many became activists in the militant anti-war movement and formed the organization, Vietnam Vets Against the War (VVAW). The group often was the lead contingent in mass anti-war marches, and famously, and dramatically, rallied at the White House and the 1972 Republican Party convention where they returned medals they had been awarded for valor and wounds.

It is generally assumed, with the draft no longer a feature, that the men and women who now comprise the military are in political agreement with the U.S. invasions and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. As the interview below demonstrates, the kernel of resistance is present. Whether it will take on the significance of the VVAW is an open question and depends in part on whether the civilian anti-war movement can reconstitute itself now that the illusions about the Obama administration have been shattered.

The war in Afghanistan, now as much Obama’s as it was Bush’s, has become the longest conflict in U.S. history and its cost, when added to that of Iraq, has passed the \$1 trillion mark. Ending the war with another American defeat in Asia also depends on the material and political support we give organizations such as Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), which like its predecessor of a generation ago, is organizing among those who have experienced the imperial adventure first hand.

The IVAW can be found on line at www.ivaw.org and welcomes ex-military personnel who have served since 2001.

The interview below was conducted with author Dahr Jamail by Seth Kershner. In the summer of 2003, Jamail was guiding climbers and running rescue missions on Mt. McKinley. For years he had written a climbing column for an Anchorage, Alaska weekly newspaper, applying knowledge gleaned from climbs across the globe. That December, Jamail traveled to Iraq, determined to report on the Iraqi resistance to the U.S. invasion and occupation.

Since then, his dispatches have been picked up by the *Guardian* (UK), the *Nation* magazine, and *Le Monde Diplomatique*, among others. As one of the only American reporters never to be “embedded” with U.S. troops, his reporting offers an unfil-

tered look at the lives of ordinary Iraqis affected by the occupation.

Seth Kershner: As you discuss in your new book, *The Will to Resist: Soldiers Who Refuse To Fight In Iraq and Afghanistan*, more and more American GIs have been openly opposing the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Could you talk a bit about what military resisters are doing?

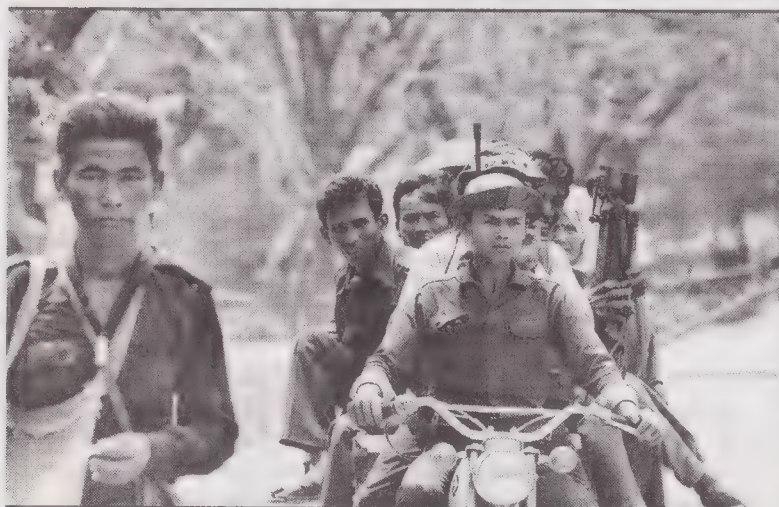
Dahr Jamail: There is a substantial amount of resistance in the military today. The main reason we don't have as broad a movement as we did in Vietnam is the lack of a draft. But what I've found through interviewing dozens and dozens of soldiers is that even in Iraq there have been many instances of overt resistance.

For example, similar to Vietnam, soldiers have really low morale. They've become completely disgruntled by the situation. And, they're doing things called search and avoid missions.

They realize their patrols are not serving any purpose whatsoever, so they go out and do fake patrols. They go out and park in fields, radio in every hour at scheduled times telling their base that they're searching for weapons caches, etc., and then go back home after their shift is done.

I've talked with countless soldiers who've participated in this themselves and have buddies over in Iraq right now that say this is ongoing. And, it's been going on since the very beginning of the occupation.

Other things that are happening, both in Iraq and back home, is that there are more and more instances of soldiers standing up against parts of the system that they don't agree with. There are many women who are standing up and speaking out about being sexually assaulted in the military. I think one of the most cogent points of the book is the chapter I have about what's happening to women in the military today. It's really astounding. I think any woman who had access to this information would never in her right mind join the military.



Part of the forces in Indochina that defeated the world's most powerful military—youthful Cambodian fighters on a motorcycle. However, the toll was tremendous; three million dead at the hands of the U.S.; 58,000 Americans. A scant number by comparison, but the scars and myths about the conflict continue into the present to explain the loss.

—photo: shot in Cambodia by a Fifth Estate staffer, 1970



The Battle of the Story of the Battle of Seattle, David Solnit and Rebecca Solnit, AK Press, 2009, \$12, www.akpress.org

MARIE MASON

Having been in Seattle for the “insurrection” against the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1999, I looked forward to reading David Solnit’s account of the days leading up to November 26 and his interpretation of the aftermath of those events. I took part enthusiastically in many of the demonstrations and blockades of which he writes, and ran in the Black Bloc.

I remember feeling personally wounded by how not only the mainstream press summarized our efforts, but also by the unexpected sting of sharply divided alternative press attacks that smacked so many radicals square across the jaw.

The second “Battle” in the title refers to Solnit’s attempts to intervene in the filming of director Stuart Townsend’s 2007 film, *Battle in Seattle*, to make it conform more closely to his version of events. I was curious to read Solnit’s account of his meetings with the director where he describes his negotiations with Townsend over content and dialogue.

I appreciated the film and wrote a mostly positive review in these pages (see FE Fall 2008). It features actors Charlize Theron and Woody Harrelson portraying the anti-WTO demonstrations through a mostly sympathetic fictionalized account of events and what was at stake. This is done through the eyes of characters portraying some of the types of people present during the tumultuous demonstrations and blockades.

Although Solnit is a skilled organizer and a person of integrity and vision, I disagree with what amounts to an attempt to disenfranchise many who were there, but whose views and purpose differed from his own. Many individuals, unions, international and U.S. based non-profits, and grass-roots groups came to participate with varying visions of what they wanted and the tactics they hoped would achieve the change they desired.

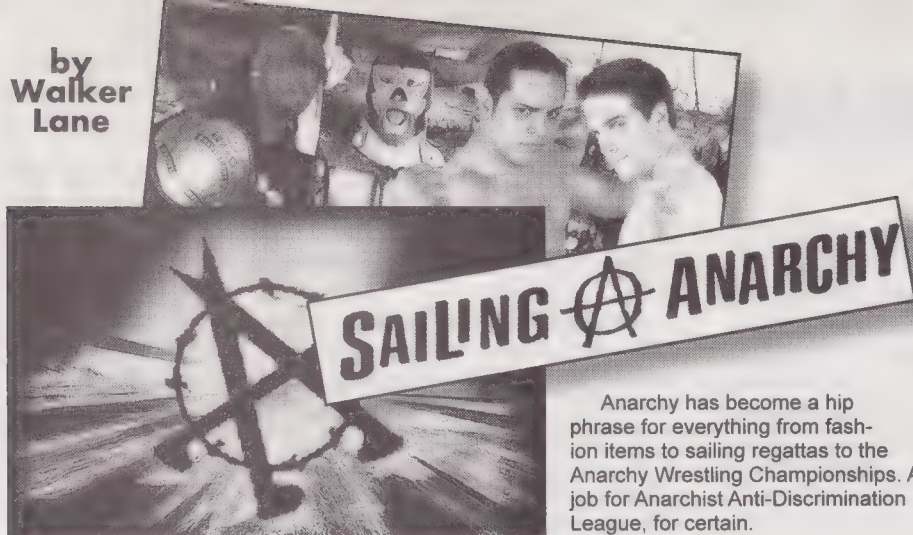
Many groups were never in contact with one another, and certainly not with the Direct Action Network (DAN), the coalition Solnit worked with, so they never signed onto their action agreement. While DAN did do a great deal of work to create the framework of a plan to blockade the streets which ultimately led to the shut down of Seattle’s crosstown traffic, it was, in fact, a glorious and unpredictable mess which ultimately won the day and forced the collapse of the ministerial talks.

Solnit makes the same critical mistake he accuses Townsend of in making his film. Like the director, he didn’t reach outside of his own experiences to interview anyone who participated in events beyond his paradigm/approval.

It is a fatal flaw in the book as a definitive historical document, but does not damage its ability to enlighten a whole new generation of radicals who want to know how some segment of the movement perceived their role in the first major successful opposition to the juggernaut of global capital.

Its detailing of organizing tactics make it a fascinating book that serves as an insight into the perspective of someone so highly committed and engaged. It helps to keep the historic memory alive and expands the foundation for dialogue that should continue about the changing face of capitalism and how it is best confronted.

by
Walker
Lane



How Once Dangerous Signs and Slogans Become Appropriated to Mean Their Opposite or Nothing

The dominant culture's appropriation and enfeeblement of language that was once angrily thrust against it is nothing new.

Even the word "revolution," which once sent shivers down the spines of a fragile bourgeoisie until their rule was assured, has been recuperated. After its brief resurrection in the 1960s, the phrase was quickly adopted by the advertising industry to mean anything new and exciting, as in "Breck's revolutionary new hair coloring."

Although it's irritating to galling to witness this process, it only happens when what the original incendiary word or phrase represents doesn't become real; then it can be picked like a fruit from the etymological tree for common or commercial usage.

For instance, rebellious dress and hair styles of the 60s, once hated by the parents of rebellious hippies and activists, are now almost universally worn. Jeans, which were often banned, now, when strategically and artistically "distressed," can sell for posterous sums.

Other examples include the peace sign, originally designed in the 1950s for the British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), and based on semaphore flag signals for the initials of the group, was seen as a traitorous display in the U.S. when it came into fashion

among anti-Vietnam war activists. However, it became so ubiquitous that even GIs wore it on their helmets while going into battle against the Vietcong.

It's unclear what has caused the peace sign's sudden reappearance ("Back by popular demand," as some pins state?), but now it's seen everywhere—on kids' lunch buckets, \$175 peace bracelets from Barney's in New York City, in Gap ads. Hopefully, it represents a generalized disgust with a world of war, but it's hard to tell.

Some recuperations are funny enough if you can wipe away the tears. Earth First (without the "!" of the radical environmental group) is a web site that features ecologically sound practices including a garbage truck that runs on the trash it collects. The radical site is dot org; these guys are dot com and are quick to disassociate themselves from the group whose name they stole.

And, like the word revolution, anarchy is being used and abused in the odd-est places.

We're all about anarchy, but Anarchy Detroit doesn't refer to our comrades in the Motor City. It's a fashion site (add dot com) which has some stylin' garb, but their t-shirts run upwards to \$30. One design even features the dictionary definition of anarchy on the back.

There are also Anarchy sunglasses and

even Anarchy Championship Wrestling on line and a Sailing Anarchy Yacht Club! Someone call the Anarchist Anti-Defamation League.

The Detroit Metro Times, in an ad for a food bank benefit recently, featured the classic clenched fist, red star and background, with the slogan, "Refuse, Resist (and, then not, 'Revolt,' which completes the revolutionary triad), but 'DRINK.'" Oh, well, it was for a good cause.

However, this goes back to the earlier point above. If we were in a period of sharp contestation with the power of the state, this slogan would define what is happening in the streets, and not have the capacity for trendy alteration.

But, damn, even the right wing is messing with our slogans.

Teabaggers were marching in Washington DC during the Congressional debates about Obama's so-called health care reform bill. Although a good portion of them receive the dreaded single-payer, universal health insurance in the form of Medicare, they were hysterically opposed to such a program being extended to the entire population.

Signs reading, "Keep Your Hands Off My Body," and similar chants could be seen and heard from them without the slightest realization that this was a key slogan of the 1970s movement to legalize abortion.

Also, shouts from the proto-fascists of, "Take Our Country Back," (one can assume they mean from the black guy), ring out at Teabagger rallies, and, this, they probably do realize, was the angry slogan of progressive liberals after the theft of two successive elections by the Bush gang.

Equally egregious, but probably unknown to the frenzied hordes of the petit bourgeoisie, was the origin of their ecological nihilist chant of "Drill, Baby, Drill." This one goes back to the 1965 Watts riot when residents, watching the LA fire department helplessly attempting to extinguish a city in flames, chanted, "Burn, Baby, Burn."

Since it's now, "Spill, Baby, Spill," don't expect to hear the call for more drilling from the righties, at least for a while, although some of them are so crazy, it's like the BP spill never happened.

So, new slogans will come, be reviled, and either become reality or wind up as an ad slogan or twisted beyond recognition.

It's up to us.

IN CRITICAL & SUFFOCATING TIMES

Continued from Page 4

banks in various places but in most cases the crowd didn't go forward because there were scabs locked inside them. It was only the building of Marfin Bank in Stadiou St. that was finally set on fire.

Just a few minutes before the tragedy started, however, it was not "hooded hooligans" who shouted "scabs" at the bank employees but organized blocks of strikers who swore at them and called them to abandon the building. Given the bulk of the demo and its density, the turmoil and the noise by the chants, it's obvious that a certain degree of confusion – common in such situations – makes it difficult to provide the accurate facts concerning this tragic incident.

What seems to be closer to the truth (from fragments of information by eye-witnesses put together) is that at this particular bank, right in the heart of Athens on a general strike day, about 20 clerks were made to work by their boss, got locked in "for their protection" and three of them died of suffocation.

Initially a molotov cocktail was thrown through a hole made in the window panes into the ground floor. However, when some bank clerks were seen on the balconies again, some demonstrators called them to leave and then they tried to put the fire out.

What actually happened then, and how, in no time at all, the building was ablaze, remains unknown. The macabre series of events that followed with demonstrators trying to help those trapped inside, the fire brigade taking too long to take some of them out, the smiling billionaire banker being chased away by the angry crowd have been well reported.

Later, the prime minister announced the news in the Parliament condemning the "political irresponsibility" of those who resist the measures taken and "lead people to death" while the government's "salvation measures" on the contrary "promote life".

The reversal was successful. Soon, a huge operation by the riot police followed. The crowds were dispersed and chased away, the whole centre was cordoned until late at night, Exarchia was under siege, an anarchist squat was invaded with many arrests, the Immigrants' Haunt was invaded by the cops and trashed and persistent smoke over the city as well as a sense of bitterness and numbness would not go away.

The consequences were visible the next day: the media virtues capitalized on the tragic death presenting it as a "personal tragedy" dissociated from its general context (mere human bodies cut off from its social context) and some went so far as to criminalize resistance and protest.

The government gained time by changing the subject of discussion to the bank deaths and the unions felt released from any obligation to call for a strike the very day when the new austerity measures were passed. Nonetheless, in such a general climate of fear, a few thousand gathered outside the Parliament at an evening rally called by some unions and left organizations.

Anger was still there, fists were raised, bottles of water and some fire crackers were thrown at the riot cops and slogans both against the parliament and the cops were chanted. An old

woman was begging people to chant to "make them [the politicians] leave", a guy pissed in a bottle and threw it to the cops, few anti-authoritarians were to be seen and when it got dark and the unions and most organizations left, people, quite ordinary, everyday people with bare hands would not go. Attacked with ferocity by the riot police, chased away, trampled down Syntagma square steps, panicked, but angered young and older people got dispersed in nearby streets.

A crackdown on anarchists and anti-authoritarians has already started and it will get more acute. Criminalizing a whole social-political milieu stretching out to far left organizations has always been used as a diversion by the state and it will be used even more so now.

However, framing anarchists will not make those hundreds of thousands who demonstrated and even the many more who stayed passive but worried, ignore the IMF and the "salvation package" offered to them by the government. Harassing our milieu will not pay people's bills nor guarantee their future, which remains bleak.

It is more than clear that the sickening game of turning the dominant fear/guilt for the debt into a fear/guilt for the resistance and the (violent) uprising against the terrorism of debt has already started. If class struggle escalates, the conditions may look more and more like the ones in a proper civil war.

The question of violence has already become central. In the same way we assess the state's management of violence, we are obliged to assess proletarian violence, as well. The movement has to deal with the legitimization of rebellious violence and its content in practical terms.

As for the anarchist-antiauthoritarian milieu and its dominant insurrectional tendency, the tradition of a fetishized, macho glorification of violence has existed for too long and consistent for us to remain indifferent now. Violence as an end in itself in all its variations (including armed struggle) has been propagated constantly for years. Especially after the December rebellion, a certain degree of *nihilistic decomposition* has become evident, extending over the milieu itself.

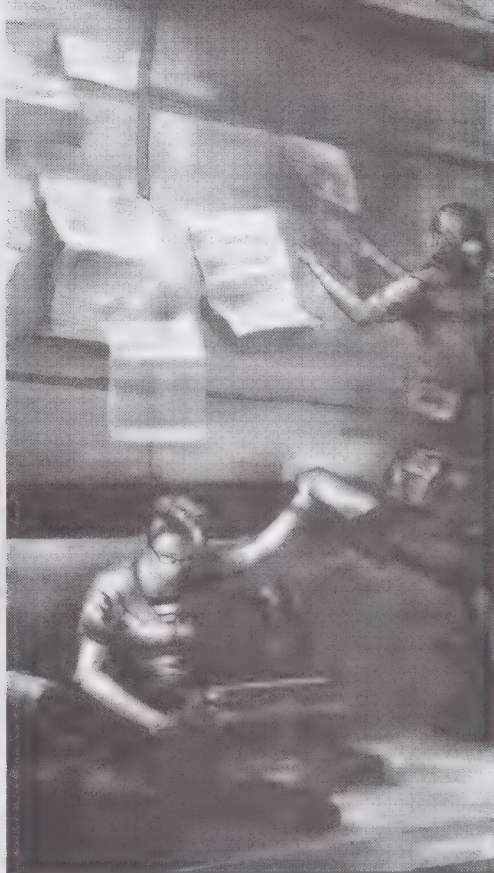
On the periphery of this milieu, a growing number of very young people are promoting nihilistic, limitless violence and "destruction" even if this includes attacks on scabs, "petit-bourgeois elements," and "law-abiding citizens."

Condemnations of these attitudes and a self-critique to some extent, have already started in the milieu. In hindsight, such tragic incidents, with all their consequences might have happened, in the December rebellion itself.

What prevented them was the creation of a (limited) *proletarian public sphere* and of *communities of struggle* which developed not only through violence, but through their own content, discourse, and other means of communication. It was these pre-existing communities of students, football hooligans, immigrants, anarchists that turned into communities of struggle by the subjects of the rebellion themselves that gave violence a meaningful place.

Will there be such communities again now that not only a proletarian minority is involved? Will there be a practical way of self-organization in the workplaces, in the neighborhoods or in the streets to determine the form and the content of the struggle and thus place violence in a liberating perspective?

Uneasy questions in pressing times, but we will have to find the answers struggling.



Review

Anarchist Writers Use Fiction to Create Real Possibilities

Mythmakers & Lawbreakers: Anarchist Writers on Fiction, edited by Margaret Killjoy, AK Press, 2009, \$12

COOKIE ORLANDO

Radicals these days tend to fall into a few different camps, and one of the most important splits is between the academics and the non-academics.

If you've got one radical leftist who is a graduate student in philosophy, for example, and another one who works, say, as a counselor for the mentally ill, the two will probably agree on most things. But the graduate student is likely to fall back on theorists like Foucault, Deleuze, Adorno, and others to explain her views, while the counselor falls back on...who?

Not an easy question. Just to be clear, I'm not talking about where radicals go for facts or journalistic accounts of capitalism's social and ecological ravages.

Both groups will probably read some of the same nonfiction books for that. What I'm talking about is where we go for descriptions of deeper questions.

What are the fundamental aspects of our humanity, and how are they manifesting in this moment? What experiences provide meaning to life? What forms of resistance are most effective and exciting? How should the radical balance her love of life with her hatred of capitalism?

Mythmakers and Lawbreakers is a new collection of interviews with radical fiction writers, conducted and edited by Margaret Killjoy, a fiction author herself and editor of *Steampunk* magazine. An interesting thread that emerges from this book is that many nonacademic radicals may be turning to fiction to explore some of these questions, which their more theoretical comrades would generally explore through theory.

Not that the two forms of writing address the same exact questions; no fictional text is going to pursue Heidegger's critique of Descartes at length. But then, most nonacademic radicals don't care about that, anyway. They are more interested in questions of pleasure (how do we enjoy life under capitalism), strategics (how do we work to destroy capitalism), and organizing (how do we bring fresh blood into radical movements), just to name a few.

This book argues powerfully that radical fiction is home to lively and accessible debates that address each of these questions, as well as many more. Take the question of pleasure. Many of the fourteen writers interviewed here acknowledge the pain of existence under the abusive rule of global capitalism, and the converse pleasure of creating fantasy worlds more to our liking.

In one of the book's strangest and most surprising interviews, Mexican novelist, Octavio Buenaventura, says this well. "When I fall into the repetitiveness of my supposedly radical lifestyle," he says, "spinning fantasies is the only way I can feel content with a life spent largely in stasis."

But it's not just spinning fantasies of a post-revolutionary society (the setting of Buenaventura's novella *Ever and Anon*). It's also in the telling and the experience of pleasure in someone else's eyes as they read or listen. "If one person I love likes what I create, I am happy," he says.

Other writers address this question

differently. Some find pleasure in fantasy and about half of the writers gathered here publish in the science-fiction or fantasy genres, including masters such as Michael Moorcock, Alan Moore, and Ursula K. Le Guin. Others get off on realism of the grittiest sort.

Zinester and graphic novelist, Cristy Road, tells Killjoy she likes to "write about things the way they are," and offers as an example, "being in love with someone who is kind of an asshole. Everyone has been in love with someone who is kind of an asshole."

Whether they dig on representing a different world from the one we have, or in representing what we've got in a style

In order to create an alternative world, it's essential to create a subversive alternative scaffolding of images, myths, and heroes

that shows it in a new light, one point of agreement the writers assembled here share is that stories are a powerful resource that radical movements need. This consensus emerges from a deeper vision among these authors of the existing world, that barren and ravaged world of capitalism and the police state, as propped up by an invisible support structure of statist fantasy. These are the fantasies that tell us it's good to obey those above us in the hierarchy, that the system cares about us and deserves our support, that money is equivalent to food and land and labor.

In order to create an alternative world, then, it's essential to create a subversive alternative scaffolding of images, myths, and heroes, upon which we can build a new consensus reality that honors the earth and all living creatures, including ourselves. In the words of Starhawk, who appears as fabulously thoughtful and intelligent in her interview here, fiction "can show you those different possibilities and potentials, at much less cost than actually going there and making those choices yourself to see how they play out."

You might think these ideas sound like a cue for writers to begin cranking out propaganda, novels in which the dashing and crusty, clad in ratty black jeans and balaclavas, rise up united and smash the state! But that's not what this

Continued on Page 47



Mona Caron's 128 foot mural commemorating Cochabamba's Water War in 2000.

Children in Cochabamba preparing the giant puppet that appears on the cover.
--photos: Mona Caron



Continued from Page 12

own economy based on resource extraction. Massive organizing and mobilizations of Bolivia's social movements opened up the space for Evo Morales to be elected as the first indigenous president in a majority indigenous country. In office, he has enacted many positive changes and contributed to the demise of right-wing elites and parties.

However, trying to radically change our communities and world by having left parties assume the power of the state has mostly resulted in social and ecological disasters. Conversely, the practices and experiments of movements around the world creating change from below—especially in Latin America—thereby avoiding the trap of pursuing political power, offer a hopeful path that we can study and learn from.

SEATTLE 1999 AND BOLIVIA'S WATER WAR

Bolivia's "Water War" began the month after the November-December 1999 Seattle WTO shutdown, and culminated in April 2000, when thousands of us in the US were occupying downtown Washington DC to disrupt IMF and World Bank meetings.

Although Cochabamba and Seattle were more intense and sustained, both those and the IMF-World Bank mass actions opened new political space within each country and marked an escalation against corporate-globalized capitalism.

As Mona led the painting of a 128-foot water war mural, and we both facilitated art making workshops at the factory worker-owned complex, *Complejo Fabril*, we spoke daily with Oscar Olivera.

Oscar was a shoe factory worker, who became a rank and file union leader and acted as spokesperson—and key organizer and strategist—for the *Coordinadora de Defensa del Agua y de la Vida* (The Coalition in Defense of Water and Life), that coordinated the mobilizations and strategies that won the water war

which took on ferocious intensity leading to the government's collapse.

Oscar is Bolivia's most profound critic of his former fellow organizer, Evo Morales, and one of the world's strongest voices, strategists and thinkers for creating change from below based on lived experience and practice.

IN HIS ACCOUNT OF THE WATER WAR, *Cochabamba!*, Oscar explains the government's privatization law that triggered the massive popular resistance.

"In 1999 and 2000—after privatizing many industries, most significantly the mines—the transnationals, the World Bank and the government mafias, attempted to take away our water. When Law 2029 was passed on October 29, 1999, only half of Cochabamba's population was connected to the central water system.

"Many others obtained water from cooperative water houses which had been built in each barrio to meet the community's needs. Law 2029 demanded that the autonomous water systems be handed over without reimbursement to the people who had invested their own time and money to build their own systems.

"The law went so far as to include wells established in people's houses. It required people to ask permission of the superintendent of water to collect rainwater."

After the Water Law took effect, details emerged about the deal that the government had cut with a private business consortium:

Olivera wrote: "Worse than Law 2029 was the forty year contract with *Aguas del Tunari* to run the Cochabamba water system. Registered in the Cayman Islands, the US-based Bechtel Corporation held the majority interest in the *Aguas del Tunari* consortium. In some cases, people's water bills skyrocketed as much as 300 percent. A pensioner or a teacher who made \$80 a month might see his or her bill jump from \$5 to \$25 a month. The people look at water as something quite sacred. Water is a right for us, not something to be sold."

Following the Water War, Bolivian social movements fought the 2003 Gas War to reclaim Bolivia's oil and natural gas from multinational corporations, still yet to be fully won. When the

Water Wars

Cochabamba and Seattle opened new political space, marking an escalation against corporate-globalized capitalism

government responded to mass demonstrations and blockades with bullets, killing and injuring many, the country rose up in outrage, driving out President Gonzalo "Goni" Sanchez de Lozada, who fled to the US where he remains today.

Two years later, Evo Morales was elected President of Bolivia, and together with his party MAS, has changed Bolivia and complicated the role of social movements.

CALL FOR A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY TO REPLACE THE STATE

"One lesson of the Water War stands out clearly; the need to dismantle the existing state."—Oscar Olivera, 2004

Bolivian social movements catalyzed by the Water War are the most radical and visionary in the world because they have a mass participatory, democratic and horizontal way of organizing and mobilizing by drawing on the communitarian roots of the majority indigenous country.

Since 2000, there had been widespread support among the social movements to replace the elite-dominated system of political parties, elections, and professional politicians with a directly elected Constituent Assembly.

I asked Marcela Olivera, Oscar Olivera's sister, about where the idea for the Constituent Assembly came from. Marcela was a participant in the Water War, an organizer with The Coalition in Defense of Water and Life, and currently is a coordinator of Red Vida, the international network of water movements that emerged in the years following the Water War. She was also one of the organizers of the ten year anniversary.

She said, "In Bolivia, for almost 20 years, the neoliberal system left the decisions in hands of an elite. So, we said: 'Let's change the rules of the system; let's call for a constituent assembly where we, the people, can decide what kind of country we want to live in.'"

"That was not possible in the short term, but it happened when Morales assumed the power. When Morales called for the constituent assembly, we realized that the parameters for the assembly to be were completely wrong."

"The different sectors that make up Bolivia—factory and other workers' unions, indigenous, etc., couldn't participate. Instead, the same political parties with other names were there—old leftists, old right wing, the same people."

FERIA DEL AGUA & WATER COMMITTEES

On April 15, Mona and I marched with 3,000 people through Cochabamba's streets ten years after the Water War to commemorate the victory. The factory workers union led the procession together with a group of kids from the city's poorer *Zona Sur* (Southern Zone) neighborhoods carrying the giant blue puppet their community had made in workshops with Mona and me. Many others joined in the march and the *Feria del Agua*, including representatives from movements fighting for water rights all over the world.

The bulk of the marchers came from *Zona Sur*, large numbers of whom resisted fiercely during the water war. The public water system, SEMAPA, does not serve their neighborhoods, so they have self-organized into neighborhood water committees of several hundred families each and self-manage their own communitarian water systems. Besides making decisions and



Scenes from the 2000 Water War that was marked by intense repression and resistance. The sign to the left reads, "It's our water, damn it."

choosing coordinators in assemblies, they often physically built their local water system with their own hands.

The International *Feria del Agua* took place the following weekend and each water committee displayed the water systems they had constructed and the innovations they had devised. Thousands of families came out for the fair, visiting the displays and tables, enjoying food, drink, and performances.

SIN PATRONES, SIN CAUDILLOS, SIN PARTIDOS

A colorful 2010 wall calendar from the Cochabamba Federation of Factory Workers showing three giant fists, each a different color of the Bolivian flag, and on them is written: "*Sin Patrones, Sin Caudillos, Sin Partidos*" (Without Bosses, Without Authoritarian Leaders, Without Political Parties) in the best tradition of anarcho-syndicalism.

The *fabriles*, factory workers, are perhaps the clearest among Bolivia's social movements maintaining their independence from Morales' popular ruling party, MAS. When the MAS-led government proposed a new labor law that included provisions limiting workers right to strike and cutting maternity leave, the *fabriles* were the sole union that stood up to the government and organized protest marches. A month later the government dropped the law.

Some MAS party activists say, "Either you are with MAS, or you are with the fascists," meaning the anti-Morales right wing elites and their supporters. But, even those who vote for and support MAS mobilize and push the government to make more significant changes than it appears willing to initiate on its own.

I asked Marcela Olivera what she thought were important considerations regarding demanding changes from above through the agency of the state. She replied, "We have learned over the last few years that real change is never made from the top. It comes from below. That is why it is very important to have independent and non co-opted social movements no matter who is in power, because they are the ones that are going to make change possible."

"When neoliberals were in power, people made change possible through mobilizations. That is why—even if it sounds contradictory—Evo Morales is in power. However, right now in

Bolivia, social movements have been co-opted and the few ones that remain independent, are being criminalized and accused of being the new right wings.”

She continued, “Real change is in the ground, the daily work we do. In Bolivia, we know that solutions will not come from the state. People have to look for the solutions from their own hands. That is exactly what happened with the water committees in the south of Cochabamba or the suburbs in Santa Cruz. We do not see anymore the state as the ‘father’ that has to provide solutions or take care of us.”

AUTOGESTION: SELF-MANAGEMENT

In the US, myself, and often other radicals, find ourselves in the uncomfortable position of opposing privatization of education, welfare, or water, while recognizing the deep problems with the humiliating manner state and federal agencies manage our resources and administer basic services.

As I listened to Bolivian social movement organizers, I realized that when they say, “*El Agua es Nuestra. Carajo!*” (“The water is ours, damn it!”), or call for the nationalization of gas and oil, their vision is not just to take it out of the privatized hands of corporate capitalists to have it administered by the government.

Rather, they use the term “autogestion,” or self-management, meaning run directly by the people. Marcela explained this idea.

She said, “After the water war, when the water company was recovered by the people, we had a dilemma. We didn’t want the company to go back to the state, to be ‘public’ again because before the water privatization the company was really bad; it was corrupt; it was handled by politicians. With the privatizations things didn’t get better. So, we didn’t want any of those alternatives: neither private nor public in the sense that it was from the state.

“We began to question the concept of ‘public.’ What does public mean? Public is when it is in the hands of the state? Or, our local governments? Our municipalities? We believe that public is when it is in the hands of the people, when people can decide about it, can participate in it, when people can control it. That is what autogestion means, when we decide about it. In the case of the water, we want self-managed”

Climate Wars: Global Social Movements vs. Capitalism

“We are here today because the governments of the world could not reach an agreement in Copenhagen [in December 2009] on cutting emissions and acting on climate change. Capitalism merchandises everything. It seeks continual expansion. The system needs to be changed. We have to choose between change or death. Capitalism is the number one enemy of mankind.”

—Evo Morales, President of Bolivia, Opening Ceremony of The World People’s Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth.

Today, the primary conflict between global social movements and capitalism is over climate. When 170 heads of state met in Copenhagen last December at the highly charged 15th annual meeting of the United Nations to address the climate crisis, the US and other rich countries blatantly ignored the world’s poorer nations, the ones most immediately impacted by climate change. Any pretense of process was disregarded allowing the

big polluters to shove through the so-called Copenhagen Accord, which ensures that the climate pollution by rich countries will not be regulated or impeded. Copenhagen made it clear that the UN process will not solve climate change and the rich countries are committed to opposing any real solutions.

Demonstrators mobilized in the streets by the thousands, facing heavy Danish police repression, and held movement building alternative forums. Bolivia was one of just a few countries to vote against the hastily constructed accord, immediately nicknamed the “Copenhagen Discord.” The Morales administration allied itself with the social movements in the streets that had mobilized from across Europe and around the world, and the Bolivian president enunciated an explicitly anti-capitalist position more radical than many of the environmental groups present.

In the wake of Copenhagen, Morales announced that Bolivia would host a World People’s Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth in April in Cochabamba, and invited activists and governments from across the world. 30,000 people attended from Bolivia, Latin America and around the world, together with representatives of governments. Though completely ignored in mainstream US media, the conference was successful in opening up an alternative space to address climate change.

Having just participated in the very grassroots Water Fair in Cochabamba, the contrast with a government sponsored conference in which the Bolivian state played a commanding role was stark. The government reserved all the hotels in town for participants, even paying to bring activists to the event including renting a plane to fly in 50 activists from the New York City area. For those who couldn’t afford hotels, there was free accommodations at military barracks. Army officers and English speaking students from the local high school and a private university where the conference was held in Tiquipaya just outside Cochabamba attended to help visiting participants.

The opening ceremony was held in a sports stadium and was a surreal combination of a leftist mass rally with movement and national flags waving similar to World Social Forum marches, stunningly beautiful costumed indigenous dance groups weaving through the stadium, and an official ceremony of state including uniformed soldiers marching in formation. Morales, joined by other heads of state and movement representatives, made a dramatic entrance and inspected the troops, followed by hours of speeches, broken up with Bolivian indigenous and popular music.

A document, the Cochabamba Peoples Declaration, came out of 17 working groups or “tables” at the climate conference as well as a new international coordinating network, the World Peoples Movement, involving both participating governments and social movements. Indigenous representatives and their allies, such as Tom Goldtooth from the Indigenous Environmental Network, fought hard to change the conferences position on REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation in Developing Countries), which violates self determination in forest communities.

Mesa 18/Table 18: No “Dirty Laundry”

However, the Morales Government refused space for a Bolivian network of communities fighting the impact of resource extraction projects—oil and gas, mining, forestry, dams, etc.,—

Continued on Page 47

The Politics of Carnival

Continued on Page 39

ethnic cleansing, frat-boy-ism, corporate sponsorship/control if you talk to some people.

So much of New Orleans black culture, the jazz, Zydeco and Black Creole culture, Mardi Gras Indians, the secret societies and krewes, etc., is so intertwined with Mardi Gras that attempts to drive blacks out of New Orleans is an attempt to kill the real Mardi Gras, and vice versa. Mardi Gras as an image sold as a package deal to bored tourists is struggling against Mardi Gras as lived experience, of deeply rooted culture, of chaotic play. And, it's not just New Orleans. Wherever big tourist dollars are involved, mixed with imperialism in the guise of the passive consumption of (official, sanitized) culture, then carnival is in danger. This is happening throughout the Caribbean, South America and elsewhere.



Not carnival, but commoditized festival

celebration for his own as well as for neighborhood children; the pageant included dramatically over sized puppets and effigies, and wound through the narrow street of Greenwich Village" (Skal).

The parade became a huge draw for participants from the gay community. As the parade became more popular, it began attracting more and more spectators from outside the neighborhood. What began as an event with no distinction between participants and the community, transformed into a parade with bleachers and a barricade keeping gawking spectators from the participants. It became more and more managed until it was moved to a larger thoroughfare.

In many ways, this mirrors the sanitation and corporate control of Gay Pride parades. This trend has been contested by anti-assimilationist and anti-consumerist queer groups such as Gay

The Greenwich Village Halloween parade was founded in 1973 by puppeteer and mask maker Ralph Lee, "who wanted to create a meaningful, mythologically resonant Halloween

Shame and many others. Corporations want to turn queers into niche markets, radical queers want to turn corporations into rubble. At least I do, are you with me?

As anarchists and radicals, we should be fighting to pre-

serve grassroots carnivals. We should be doing what we can to nudge them in anti-authoritarian, anti-corporate directions, not as outsider agitators, but as community members.

The Krewe of Eris is doing this in New Orleans, and radical queers around the world are doing it in their own communities. I did a zine, *Idle Hands The Devil's Work: Radical Interpretations of Halloween*, that attempted to do the same with that day. I'm sure there are many other examples. We should also make our own carnivals and festivals and celebrations. We should challenge ourselves to make them truly joyous, anarchic, full of misrule and good cheer.

Reclaim the Streets comes to mind, radical elements within the Rave community, Earth First! and similar gatherings have elements of carnival. This is part of what a recent issue of the *Fifth Estate* (Play! Fall 2008) is about. Also, a recent issue of *Communities magazine* (Festivals and Gatherings #142).

The work of Hakim Bey is obviously relevant; every real carnival is a temporary autonomous zone. His proposal for an Immediatist Potlach in *Immediatism* is relevant, too. His love of Fourier and dinner parties. But, I digress. The point is that we must make our own carnivals to our own tastes. The CD this zine accompanies is a small contribution to this process. It is my soundtrack to an imaginal carnival. It reflects my tastes and interests, but I hope you will like it too. For a world of joy and pain, of lived experience, of wilderness and burning factories, of song and dance.

A world where every carnival gets way out of hand.

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FE Note: In the random manner carnivals can get out of hand, so, too, does this article appear in our pages. A staff member sent it to us months ago, and we found it tucked away in our on-line files. It seemed like a good fit for our theme and we liked the subject matter, but upon reading it, realized that it had been printed elsewhere, particularly since it makes reference to an accompanying CD which obviously isn't here.

We made an effort to find its origin and its author to no avail. We assume neither the writer nor the publication will have a problem with the article being reprinted since the text cites the *Fifth Estate* approvingly.

However, we want to give credit where it is due, and apologize for not giving attribution in this edition. We will in the next one when those who produced the article contact us.

BACK COVER: SETH TOBOCMAN.

Seth Tobocman is one of the founding editors of the political comic book, *World War III Illustrated*. His most recent book is *Understanding the Crash*. Other books include *You Don't Have to Fuck People Over to Survive* and *Disaster and Resistance*. Information at sethtobocman.com.

Arab Surrealism Against Islam On Blasphemy and Imagination

Don LaCoss

In 1973, a small network of Arab students living in Paris, London, and Vienna founded the Arab Surrealist Movement in Exile. At the group's core was Abdul Kader el-Janabi, Farid Lariby, Mohammed Awadh, and Maroïne Dib; they re-oriented surrealist elements against the intense misery they saw rampant in the Middle East: despotic police-state politics, nationalism (particularly Ba'athism in Syria and Iraq), militarism, patriarchal oppression, neo-colonial European interference, grueling poverty, and suppressed imaginations.

They integrated surrealism with ideas culled from Situationists, radical feminists, the rebel student and autonomist worker movements of the late 1960s, and the revolutionary struggles in what was then called "the Third World" (including the ghettos and reservations in the US).

Most of their publications (most notably *ar-Raghba al-ibahiyya* [*Libertarian Desire*]) were outlawed in every Arab-speaking nation in the Middle East and North Africa for their seditious, blasphemous, and outrageously scabrous content.

Drawing from the work of important radical liberation theorists of the time such as Theodor Adorno, Erich Fromm, and Germaine Greer, the Arab Surrealist Movement in Exile formulated a sharp analysis of the ways in which political oppression, sexual repression, and Islam mutually reinforced one another in so many regimes in the Arab world (and, after 1979, in Iran).

It is difficult to find images or texts by the surrealists that attack the tyrannies of Islam without also encountering references to other authoritarian efforts to control, re-direct, or distort desire and sexual expression; frequently, the surrealists argued that State terrorism in the Middle East was at least partially rooted in traditional patriarchal Muslim violence against women and gay men, much in the same way that fascism has been understood by writers like Wilhelm Reich, Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, Klaus Theweleit, and George Mosse.

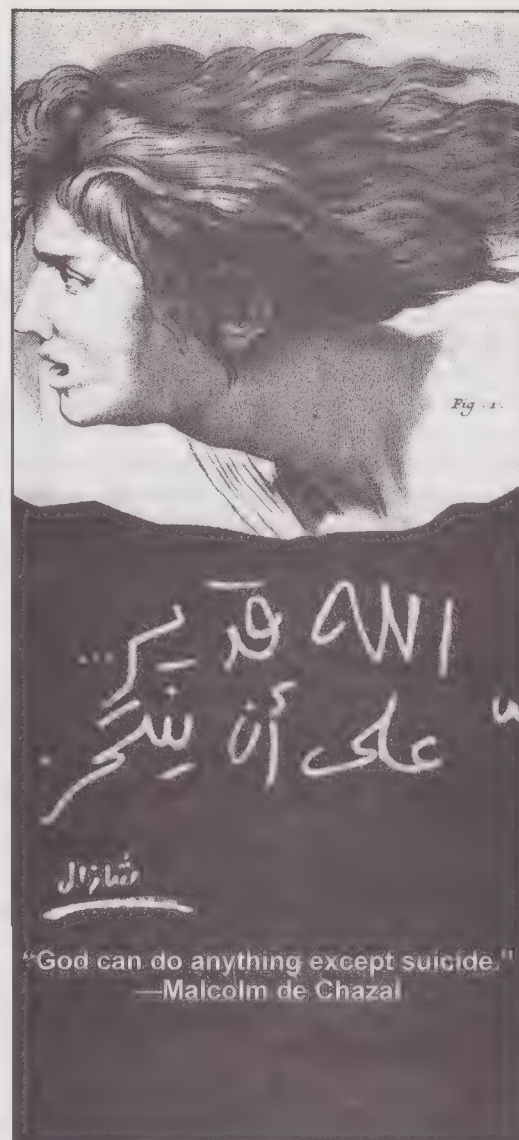
This excerpt from the Exile Movement's founding manifesto sums up many of their concerns: "Our surrealism destroys the so-called 'Arab fatherland.' We call upon individuals and the masses to unleash their instincts against all forms of repression, including the repressive 'reason' of the bourgeois order. We explode the mosques and the streets with the scandal of sex returning to its body, bursting into flames at each encounter. We poison the intellectual atmosphere with the elixir of the imagination, so that the poet's self will be realized in realizing the historical transformation of poetry. We liberate language from the prisons and stock markets of capitalist confusion."

What follows is a combination of the definitions of "blasphemy" and "imagination" from a glossary of sorts that was supposed to be a regular column in *ar-Raghba al-ibahiyya*.

It was published in 1974; this is the first time it has been reprinted or translated. Readers interested in more information can check out the relevant chapters in Sibylla Krainick's *Arabischer Surrealismus im Exil. Der irakische Dichter und Publizist Abd al Quadir al-Ganabi* (Reichert, 2001).

On Blasphemy and Imagination

If you toss the detestable banalities of religion into the lap of humiliation, then leave them where you threw them and ignore them for good. But don't let that prevent you from practicing blasphemy. Some critics ask what would be the value of insulting Allah after we have established with certainty that He does not exist, but blasphemy does not validate religion or make that it more truthful. Pronounc-



ing blasphemy's rough and outrageous words is significant and necessary if for no other reason that they become a delightful pleasure to utter. Moreover, blasphemy lends a hand to the imagination.

Imagination is a force whose existence is dismissed by journalists, economists, and anyone else generally concerned with obstructing the restless vitality of free thinking and sexual feelings. The reason for this is because the visions that are awakened by this force are so beyond our control that it has the potential ability to control us.

Imagination reveals to us the scope of human potential and nourishes desire by giving us the hope needed to fulfill these potentials. All dimensions of human happiness lie in the imagination. No one can be fully satisfied until all fantasies of this imagination have been achieved.

Review

Surrealism & Atheism

Don LaCoss

Guy Ducornet, *Surréalisme et athéisme. «À la niche les glapisseurs de dieu!»*. Ginkgo éditeur, 2007.

Surrealist Guy Ducornet has been active in the Paris and Chicago groups since the late 1960s, as well as a participant in the para-surrealist Phases movement. In 2005, Ducornet began contacting surrealist groups around the world and announced his plans to re-issue the classic surrealist proclamation against religion from 1948, “À la niche les glapisseurs de dieu!” (“Get Back Into Your Kennels, You Yelping Dogs of God!”).

Ducornet felt that the “Dogs of God” text was as sadly relevant now as it was then, and he planned on translating it into a variety of languages and to have it counter-signed by those surrealists today who still supported the statement (fifty had originally signed it sixty years ago).

Ducornet’s proposal sharpened new debates within the surrealist underground about religion. Some questioned the reason for recycling a six decades-old document, especially one that is so heavily laden with very specific references to post-World War II French cultural politics.

At the time “Dogs of God” was first written, the surrealists of the newly-reconstituted Paris group were lashing out at various attempts by some French Catholic intellectuals (the “yelping dogs of god” referred to in the title) to co-opt surrealism as part of the Christian philosophical tradition.

French Catholics had collaborated with the Nazis during the Occupation and they were being further outflanked by ideas and culture being circulated by Communists in France after 1945. In desperation to become relevant, some Catholic philosophers plundered the work of different avant-garde groups, and a handful tried to colonize surrealism.

But there were surrealists in 1948 who strongly resisted signing “Dogs of God,” and the arguments led to a great deal of conflict within the group. One of the more minor skirmishes came when automatist and libertarian communist Ramses Yūnān of the Cairo surrealist group angrily rebuffed the need for

the manifesto, saying that it was pathetically redundant since poet Benjamin Péret already had made perfectly clear the surrealists’ absolute opposition to religion in the 1930s.

(The more serious falling out, involving Michel Carrouges, Henri Pastoreau, and several other surrealists, is discussed in Ducornet’s chapter on that 1948 document.)

However, now, after all these years, many of those Catholic writers named in “Dogs of God” have (rightfully) disappeared into obscurity, even to those living in France. It was difficult, therefore, for some in 2005 to see how a re-publication of the statement could be relevant today, a position not unlike Yūnān’s.

The Paris Group of the Surrealist Movement, for instance, agreed not to counter-sign the old statement, and instead they issued a new one on Christmas Day, 2005, “Pour en finir avec le spectre de Dieu” (“To Be Finally Over and Done With the Ghost of God.”). But in the end, some one hundred and seventy-five surrealists signed in support of Ducornet’s project, and the “Dogs of God” manifesto (translated into German, English, Spanish, Greek, Italian, Dutch, Portuguese, Czech, and Arabic) is the centerpiece of his satisfying book, *Surréalisme et athéisme* (*Surrealism and Atheism*).

Whether or not one agrees with Ducornet’s reprocessing of the “Dogs of God” declaration, there is no denying that his study of surrealist approaches and attitudes toward religion is an important one. Chapters section off imperative moments and

In “Dogs of God,” the surrealists promote a “Promethean mysticism” that seeks to overthrow supernatural thinking about god and replace it with a supernatural thinking about human beings



themes of surrealist anti-religious resistance, covering activities discussed in surrealist journals in France but also among other groups as well.

“Dogs of God” is positioned at the book’s center and is key in helping to trace the continuities between the surrealists’ pre-WWII activism and that of the latter half of the century. This positioning makes the document more relevant for our own time.

Somewhere in *Surréalisme et athéisme*, Ducornet wonders why recent scholarship on the history of free-thinking movements fails to mention surrealism. Part of the problem is that those who have spoken out against religion or in favor of atheism in the last eight or ten years have done so almost exclusively from a scientifically positivist point of view.

But surrealists were as wary of instrumental reason and vulgar materialism as they were of religion, so instead of simply dismissing religion as illogical or unreasonable, they emphasized the propensity of these dogmatic practices to neutralize free will and free thought from an anti-authoritarian perspective. Rather than simply negate religion and religious institutions with science and physical realities, the surrealists assailed religion on moral grounds with the idea of undermining it in order to overthrow it.

In “Dogs of God,” the surrealists promote a “Promethean mysticism” that seeks to overthrow supernatural thinking about god and replace it with a supernatural thinking about human beings, a “mystical humanism” first articulated in left-Hegelian philosopher-anthropologist Ludwig Feuerbach’s devastating analysis of the faith-based self-delusion in *The Essence of Christianity* (1841).

Ducornet’s book provides a useful account of the full spectrum of the surrealist position, including strains of heresy, sacrilege, esoteric thought, and do-it-yourself counter-mythologies that were all used against the death cults of Judeo-Islamo-Christian monotheism. These interests are frequently misunderstood and

misrepresented by surrealism's critics as the substitution of one religious tradition with some other.

But this is a dangerous misrepresentation of these pursuits—in many aspects, the surrealist interest in the fields of blasphemy, voodoo, gnosticism, the occult arts and sciences, folklore, and homemade alternative myth is better understood as a tactic of non-theistic demolition.

I am reminded here of the work of contemporary parody religions, like Ivan Stang's Church of the Subgenius, the anarcho-absurdist Discordian movement, the anti-capitalist street-preaching performances of Reverend Billy's Church of Stop Shopping, the goddess-worship sects of the Invisible Pink Unicorn [May Her Hooves Never Be Shod], and the anti-Creationist Pastafarianism of the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster.

To say that surrealist interest in counter-myths was itself a religious endeavor is to miss the point entirely; it is like saying that all the pleasure taken from watching Christopher Lee in those old Hammer Studio vampire movies is centered on some latent Christian reverence for the divine omnipotence of crucifixes.

Religion's counter-revolutionary tendency to enforce a passive acceptance of the status quo is obvious and well-documented, but Ducornet rightfully points out that this paralyzing reactionary power is directly linked to religion's fierce drive to suppress the Marvelous.

Surrealist Pierre Mabille explained that the Marvelous is the sensation that one's imagination experiences when heretofore hidden dimensions or facets of reality are suddenly and startlingly unveiled, opening vistas "beyond limits opposed by our social structures—greater beauty, greater power, and greater pleasure of longer duration."

Sustained immersion in the icy water of religious ideology drowns the Marvelous and refloats it as "proof" of the miraculous wonder of some god or another—the wildly enlightening disorientation that comes from a surrealist cultivation of the Marvelous is stabilized and recuperated by the pimps and prostitutes of god as something supernaturally and superhumanly alien, a process that eclipses the power and glory of the human imagination for a set of tired religious directives specifically designed for centuries to blunt our sensibilities.

While Ducornet's assemblage of surrealism's greatest anti-god hits gathered in a single volume is useful (and appreciated), it is this examination of how destroying religion would help liberate the Marvelous that is the most revelatory thing about this book.

Today, surrealists the world over are keenly attentive to the hideous surge into our communities of increasingly violent religious fantasies. The woods are full of them these days, it seems—ugly Catholico-Protestant neo-puritans, militantly mega-or-

thodox Talmudite statist, post-colonial paleo-Islamists, rural sex-cult Mormon survivalists, reactionary Hindu nationalist extremists—there is no end to grotesque concoctions of insipid superstition, rationalized political violence, and hierarchically-oppressive spirituality.

Each new perverse permutation needs to be met with a counter-offensive that goes well beyond the reasoned argumentative analyses of the so-called "New Atheists" (as espoused by the evolutionary biology professor Richard Dawkins: "God is very, very improbable"). Ducornet's *Surréalisme et athéisme* aptly illustrates a more devastating attack than those limply offered up by these secular liberals.

The surrealist arsenal serves the insurrection of the Marvelous and the liberation of the imagination against the dementia of god-abettors with mordant humor and hoax, agitational propaganda, chaotic play, and aggressively confrontational godlessness.

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Mick Vranich 1946-2010

Our friend and comrade, Mick Vranich, died March 29 following a terrible construction accident in February. If you ever met Mick, you wouldn't forget him. You may have seen him perform his poetry, punctuating lines with a stoic stare or watched him play guitar, amazed at his ability to perfect each note, each cord in sync with poetic ease. Perhaps you attended one of his benefits calling for freedom for Leonard Peltier. Maybe you just stopped by his Solstice campfire in the middle of Detroit and were offered a cup of coffee and some real, true talk, or poems like the ones of his on this page.

PURGE THE EXCESS

high seas the threat of sharks
the thrashing machine strapped
to your brain with bailing wire
embarking on one more step
into the water to avoid
stripped of your defenses.

The community has lost a friend whose warmth and generosity transcended the generations. He was an amazing poet, and guitar player, who championed those who were dealt a bad hand by the justice system. Mick made his living as a carpenter and lived in an always to be restored Victorian mansion in the Detroit's Cass Corridor with his wife and

founder of *Alley Culture*, artist, Sherry Hendrick. Besides his legion of friends and cultural collaborators, he leaves behind four books of poetry and dozens of recorded music and spoken word CDs.

SUN DOWN SUN UP

another notch off the slice
of time here on the edge of
the millennium looks like we
got more to do than we set
out to do when we first put
the spirit boat into the water
yanked on the lines the sails
filled with the sweet winds
of dawn but the storm kicked up
so unpredictably darkness crashed
down like a muddy heel
we had to find the other source
of strength to propel the vision
fling it through space like
an alchemical flashlight
winging it over the lakes.

When reading or playing with his band, Mick would often tilt his head slightly and stare out from blue eyes to clear the path ahead, our flashlight into the millennium; gone; there is a new darkness.

—Christine Monhollen

CLOAK OF SKIN

surrounded and left alone
more marks that don't connect
movies with the faces as big
as worlds of flesh in bright
light on the thin screen.

i don't have anything to say about
it you should talk
to someone else like the wind
working up into a frenzy
in the trees bending and breaking
branches thrown to the ground
like a blanket made of sticks
the ceremonial fire is raging.

no one is watching
maybe a few are seeing it
in the corner of their eyes
the axis is crooked
the hole is getting bigger.

I am nothing
just the dream of becoming
in this cloak of skin
hear what i'm saying

the cloak of skin has a mouth
to talk with the shadows here
that won't go away
until they see what happens
to it all
what happens to it all.

But i am nothing in this
cloak of skin dragged
through the streets
at the end of a rotting rope
unnoticed because the big screen
is showing how the faces should look
with the smiles riveted in place
put behind the glass
examined carefully thrown
in the heap like the rest
of the bulldozed bodies
still warm still quivering.

i am nothing
just this cloak of skin
with a mouth saying
don't kill everything so soon.

while you load your rifles
while you slit a throat

while you fill the lung
with poison gas
ravage the earth to the bone
incinerate the bones
to run the conveyor belt
pile up the goods for the ones
who traded in their souls
for a shoe shine.

don't talk to me
about what you do
your words don't mean anything
to me you think you are
someone because you have something
a gold watch a gold car
a gold house a gold chain
around your neck
a gold shackle
around your leg
a big smile your words
have no meaning to me
i am nothing
a cloak of skin
with a mouth saying
don't kill everything
so soon.

—Mick Vranich

Reich

The Emotional Plague & the Authoritarian Family

The role of religion within authority's Holy Trinity (the compulsive family, religion, and the State) with its blatant anti-sexual ideology and its historic record of service to totalitarianism is easily understood as an institution of repression and most revolutionaries quickly reject overt religious mysticism of all varieties. What is at first surprising is that identical or even *more reactionary* pronouncements about sex leap from the mouths of those same leftists who claim to speak for liberation and revolution.

However, an analysis which looks beyond the rhetoric designed for public consumption by both the Church and Left quickly understands the hidden purpose of the repressive sexual views: the reproduction of patriarchal, authoritarian society.

Throughout the so-called socialist world, the sexual ideology of the leader and the state plays the same role that Christianity plays in the West: sexuality is discouraged in youth, homosexuals are persecuted, and authoritarian families are exalted. Even the structure is the same: in place of saints, leaders are venerated through the omnipresent statues of Lenin, Mao or Kim. In place of the Bible and prayer books, schools in socialist countries provide for compulsory reading of the teachings of the Leader and "good communists" are thought to be those who have the maximum amount of the Leader's thoughts inscribed in their minds.

Reich described the process of inhibited sexual excitation being replaced by religious exaltation exemplified by such occurrences as priests ejaculating during mass or women reaching near orgasmic states during frenzied religious revivals. Extending that analysis to the political realm, it is hard to miss the religious mystical tenor of mass political rallies dominated by the revered leader and structured to produce child-like emotions of dependency in the person attending.

At Hitler's stage-managed Nuremberg rallies* or the anthill, choreographed, mass demonstrations in Peking or Pyongyang, participants are reduced to insignificance by the giantism of the

Continued from Page 9

them wanted to go as far as the Tom Paines, the Daniel Shays, or the Russian factory committees or anarchists wanted to push the situation.

THE LEFT AND SEXUAL REPRESSION

setting while their actualizations as people come through the celebration of the Leader or the State.

Also, the very content of the pronouncements by the Vatican and the left on sex share a similarity beyond the fact that both are repressive, anti-sexual statements. Both carry with them a fall from grace by the offending individual "You are not a good Catholic" or "You are not a good communist"), bringing the entire weight of the dominant social institution down on the head of the sinner/counter-revolutionary ("condemned in the New Testament" or "against the Revolution").

Individuals find it generally hard to buck the weight of such condemnation. To do so means to become a pariah, a rebel, and suffer all of the consequences such a decision implies. In normal times, when a society is functioning relatively smoothly, few opt to take such a road; it is just too perilous, both physically and psychologically.

And, it is precisely this fear, this timidity, which has allowed every society its ability to continue functioning even though the vast majority of its members have no real, sensuous, human reason to reproduce it.

THE EMOTIONAL PLAGUE & ITS SOLUTION

Reich characterized this dismal view of human behavior with its willingness to submit to authority as "the emotional plague," yet he did not despair of altering the situation.

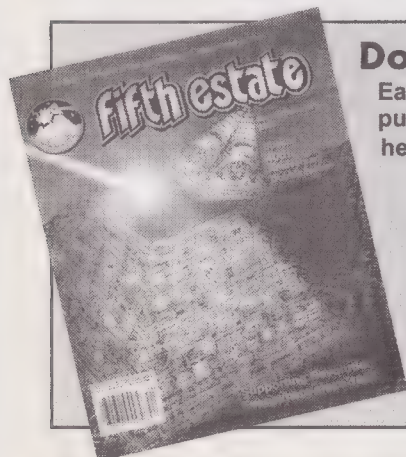
In *The Murder of Christ*, he states, It is possible to get out of a trap. However, in order to break out of a prison, one first must confess to *being in a prison*. The trap is man's emotional structure. [And one must assume he included woman in this formulation.]

It is, he argued, only persons structurally capable of liberation who could then begin a successful struggle to abolish authoritarian social structures.

*Hitler's architect, Albert Speer, described the setting for the Nuremberg Nazi Party rallies in his book *Inside the Third Reich*, thusly "The hundred and thirty sharply defined [searchlight] beams, placed around the field at intervals of forty feet, were visible to a height of twenty or twenty-five thousand feet, after which they merged into a general glow.

"The feeling was of a vast room, with the beams serving as might pillars of infinitely high outer walls. Now and then a cloud moved through this wreath of lights, bringing an element of surrealistic surprise to the mirage. The effect, which was both solemn and beautiful, was like being in a cathedral of ice," British Ambassador Henderson wrote."

The impact on the individual in such a setting has always been taken for granted in liberal and leftist literature when describing the Right, but the same criteria is never applied to left-wing government rallies where the form is identical.



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Each Fifth Estate has a theme, so very little in our back issues are out of date. Like every publication, hundreds of copies are left over when the next edition appears. It breaks our hearts to think these will be recycled into a bin rather than into readers' hands.

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Reading

"Letters of Insurgents"

34 Years After Its Publication, A Radical Classic Is Igniting Discussion Again

by Unruhlee

Fredy Perlman with the cover of *Letters of Insurgents* at Detroit's Black and Red Print co-op, 1976



As we go to press in late June, we are receiving reports of discussion groups formed around the country, in person and in on-line blogs, that are reading Fredy Perlman's 1976 historical novel, *Letters of Insurgents*, published by Detroit's Black & Red.

One reader, DeAnna Tibbs, described the book as consisting of "fictional letters between two Eastern European workers, Yarostan Vochek and Sophia Nachalo, separated by twenty-five years and two continents. As they reconnect through an exchange of letters, we learn about the battles they have fought – physical, political, emotional, and moral – and eventually the ones they have left to fight."

Another says, "It makes me cry and laugh like no other book. It is filled with fictional versions of real historical upheavals in the middle third of the 20th century, depicting them in vivid and personal ways that grow out of the charac-

ters' lives."

What Wilhelm Reich called the emotional plague – the constellation of sexual repression and misery, patriotism, conformity, and authoritarian character armor – is thoroughly studied, in its Bolshevik as well as Western forms.

Also considered is how the emotional plague can lose its grip on us, how rebellion and liberation can become contagious and spread in a wildfire of subversion; but also how the dynamics of this plague reconstituting itself is crucial in the death of liberated situations.

Fredy Perlman was a participant in the May '68 uprising in France. He was involved with an early radical student newspaper in the height of McCarthy-era Los Angeles in the late 1950s. He was associated with the Living Theater in New York City in the early 1960s, and lived and studied in Belgrade, Yugoslavia from 1963-66.

He and his wife Lorraine formed the Black and Red publishing co-operative in 1968 in Kalamazoo, Michigan, but soon moved to Detroit. B&R prided itself, rightly so, on not having a division of labor which entailed Fredy, Lorraine, and other cooperators learning every step of the printing process from typesetting to printing and binding. The first edi-

tions of *Letters*, a huge undertaking for even commercial publishers and printers, were done in their entirety by volunteers at B&R's Michigan Ave. print shop.

Perlman was an erudite student of radical history (as well as psychological and political theory) and had personal contacts with people who made that history, including anarchists in the Spanish revolution and civil war, and people involved with social struggles within the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.

PERLMAN WAS THE FIRST to translate Guy Debord's classic of the Situationist movement, *Society of the Spectacle*, into English. Perlman recasts much of Debord's abstractions brilliantly and in a down-to-earth way in *Letters*.

For those interested in Soma, the Reichian-anarchist "therapy" created by Roberto Freire in Brazil, you might like to know that Freire was first exposed to

Wilhelm Reich through Julian Beck of the Living Theater in Paris 1968. It is clear from *Letters* that Perlman, who was associated with Beck almost 10 years before that, also fully absorbed Reich.

Adding further to its richness, *Letters* includes a reading of Lewis Mumford through a Situationist lens. This kicked off the "anti-tech" tendency in anarchist theory, although the treatment of these topics in *Letters* is more nuanced and superior.

All of this informs *Letters*. When he wrote its 830 pages in the early 1970s, Perlman felt the arena for meaningful radical activity was shrinking, and saw himself as a "rememberer" of rebellion.

As Lorraine Perlman wrote in a biography of him, "In *Letters of Insurgents*, his contribution to a history of the period in which he lived, he recorded various forms of rebellion; he was acquainted with many of them first hand. He also recorded the dead ends, the co-optation and the thwarting of rebellious projects. [The book was] a synthesis of most of Fredy's 42 years; it follows fairly closely Fredy's physical and intellectual journeys, reporting the upheavals which affected him, his family and his comrades..."

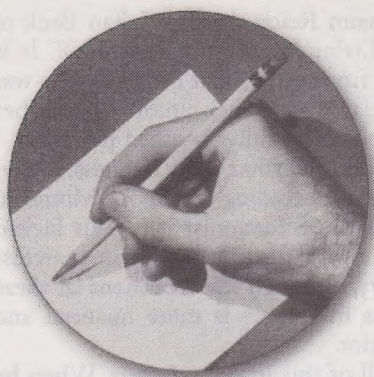
Letters is available on line as text and audio, as well as the original book

LATELY EFFORTS HAVE BEEN made to bring *Letters* out of its undeserved obscurity, so there are now fully searchable and nicely formatted versions of it online here: theanarchistlibrary.org/authors/Sophia_Nachalo_and_Yarostan_Vochek.html. An audio version is available at audioanarchy.org/letters.html.

However, the best source is through Black and Red, where the huge volume sells for \$10 plus \$4 for shipping. Their web site is blackandred.org and has all of Perlman's titles plus the work of other authors including *Society of the Spectacle*. Postal mail address is POB 02374, Detroit, MI 48202.

Although the reading groups have already commenced on-line through insurgentsummer.org, it is possible to catch up with the reading, or to use it as a model to begin new readings.

Also, there is an open face-to-face group at the Long Haul Infoshop in Berkeley, on Tuesday nights 8-10 PM at 3124 Shattuck Ave. in Berkeley, California.



Letters

Continued from Page Two

info, and their general snail-mail list.

An inmate enters on their computer all the names of anyone they wish to contact. You cannot put a letter in the prison mailbox without that label. Prisoner censors reading outgoing and incoming mail are notoriously slow and arbitrary, meaning weeks can go by before letters are sent and replies received.

The closely monitored prison email system takes about an hour to get to the addressee, and another hour once sent back. [FE note: Sometimes days!] One is, of course, free to opt out of the process. At which point you have no access to pretty much anything.

A former federal prisoner

Help Left Bank

Left Bank books has been a collectively-owned and collectively-run anarchist/anti-authoritarian independent bookstore for 36 years.

During this time, hundreds of people in the Seattle area have given their time, energy and creativity to help this important project contribute to our thriving anarchist community.

And, thousands of anarchist/anti-authoritarian comrades from the Seattle area and many other places have also contributed to make this an ongoing project by visiting, giving presentations, buying books, and recommending the

bookstore to friends and relatives.

However, due to the worsening of the capitalist crisis and its impact on most of the store's supporters and patrons, Left Bank Books is facing unprecedented financial difficulties. Sales are way down and book distributors are tightening credit terms. It is also facing competition from corporate outlets, such as Borders and Amazon.com.

We very much value this bookstore and the role it plays in providing anarchist-anti-authoritarian books, papers and zines (and much more), and in helping to strengthen our community.

This is why friends of Left Bank Books are working in a variety of ways to try to raise enough money to help this bookstore survive in these hard times. Whatever you can contribute will be greatly appreciated. If you can help out, please send donations of any size to: Left Bank Books, 92 Pike Street, Seattle, WA 98101. You can also call the store and make a donation with a credit card or buy books at: (206) 622-0195.

Cul de Sac

Continued from Page 20

ing Feudalism by the time of the 1688 English Revolution, the French Revolution and the Russian Revolution which were all instances of the economic order overturning the established political regime.

These revolutions did not happen because people had ideas; they happened because of economic forces.

But we have misled ourselves about the power of ideas. We now think that ideas can change the world. But, they don't. The only thing they can do is strengthen the current economic system. Thus, plans for the new world, as drawn up by the traditional left revolutionaries will reflect current economic modes. Their revolution is more likely to be a self-managed counter-revolution than anything else.

Both types of society, modern and precivilization, lack that individualist freedom that is so highly valued in modern civilized society. Freedom is a concept coming out of the era of the bourgeois revolutions.

Freedom did not exist in pre-civilization times. The modern ideals of individual freedom, or love, or friendship,

have developed in a society that is based on the alienation of humans from their daily existence and from each other. They are romantic ideals conceived to alleviate the existential despair of living in a society which champions individualism over community.

What pre-civilisation societies retained was a conscious symbiosis with the land that made their existence closer to that of animals. Although the parameters of their thought were constrained by this symbiosis, they had more than us. They existed as part of something, whereas we exist in isolation from any reference points apart from those given by the economic system.

We can no longer feel and know the earth, even as it falls through our fingers. We do no longer look around us and know the trees and the hills as our real home, our real parent. The high points of human culture and sophistication, which are only to be found in pre-civilised societies, have long gone.

Every opposition we throw against the dominate social and economic organization of our lives only feeds into that structure and makes it stronger.

We are caught inside an existential loop from which there is no escape.

Chávez's Clown

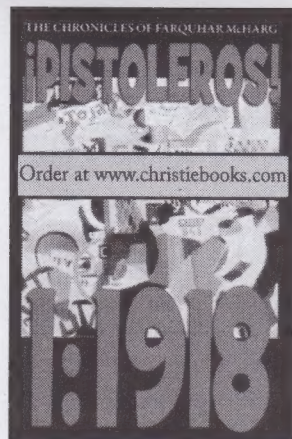
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The problem is that such political relativism allows many Marxist-Leninists, demagogues and politicians, whose only concern is the conquest of power, its execution and conservation, to get shelter in Chomsky's anti-imperialist arguments instead of caring about helping the people to organize themselves.

On the contrary, maintaining such immoral discretion with such perseverance and allowing himself to be photographed besides the Castros and the Chavezes, he becomes an accomplice of the authoritarian, dictatorial deviations of these modern day oligarchs.

Unfortunately, this obstinacy in maintaining such Manichean discretion (considering that these demagogues access to power is less of a danger than the destruction caused by Yankee imperialism in the world) is not only inefficient in preventing such destruction (these demagogues continue to do business with the empire's multinational corporations), but also contributes to demobilize people and makes even harder the task of those who struggle against worldwide domination by Capital and the State.

September 2009 - April 2010



Pistoleros! 2: 1919 is the second volume of the memoirs and notebooks of Farquhar McHarg, a seventy-six-year-old anarchist from Glasgow. Its writing was prompted by the murder of a lifelong friend.

McHarg's *Chronicles* record his evolving beliefs and sense of mission, and the remarkable adventures he experienced from the day he sailed into the neutral port of Barcelona in the spring of 1918, a naïve but idealistic eighteen-year-old, and 1976.

Farquhar's *Chronicles* are folk history, bringing the changes that shook the political and social landscape of Spain (and the world) between 1918 and 1976 into the framework of adult lifetime. They make a vexatious but fascinating story that provides a deep insight into the spirit that moved the selfless, generous, occasionally naïve and recklessly idealistic people who were involved in the bitter social struggles that marked the hectic insurrectionary and utopian aftermath of the great imperialist war of 1914-1918.

Contemptuous of traditional political parties and professional politicians, and inspired by the example – and the myth – of the Russian Revolution, these men and women aimed to rid the world of a cruel, corrupt, arbitrary and oppressive political and economic system that abused authority and exploited, degraded, tortured and murdered in the name of profit and power.

The transformation of the unworldly young Farquhar, in the climactic and rebellious years between 1918 and 1924, is fascinating to observe as he acquires consciousness and identity through his experiences in a world for which he is little prepared. The journey he embarks upon in these pages is not simply a personal memoir or an exploration of his own psyche. The many untold stories that unfold along his way provide an understanding of the thoughts and deeds of people who tried to rescue the Europe from the cycle of disaster, war and death.

Anarchist Fiction Writers

Continued from Page 35

book is about. Happily, the writers are mostly allergic to propaganda. They don't want to shove their ideology down your throat, but get you to question all ideology.

"How do you write a book that simultaneously calls itself and all other books into question," asks an anonymous representative of Crimethinc, "in such a way that it has a dynamic effect on the readership rather than persuading people to your opinion?" Starhawk builds on this idea, criticizing activists who make decisions based not on experience and stra-

tegic brainwork, but "because they think that's the way you should do things if you're really an anarchist." In other words, they do it because of ideology they've read somewhere.

That's not to say that just any message will do. Obviously, the point of the game here is to change our civilization at the deepest possible level. "Any book that doesn't start from the fact that this culture is killing the planet and works to resolve that is unforgivable," Derrick Jensen says. That's right; Jensen, best known for his nonfiction books about ecological devastation, is also a fiction writer with two recently published novels to his credit.

The message of this book isn't that activists should retreat to the hills and start writing short stories. Many of the writers interviewed here do not just write, but

Water War/Climate War

Continued from Page 38

to present their struggles and their critical meaning for stopping climate change. They were told by government representatives that they were "local issues," and this was an international conference at which they did not want "dirty laundry" aired.

The excluded groups decided to create their own space outside the official conference calling it Mesa (table) 18, since there were 17 official approved tables. At table 18, an organizer told me that the government had made it difficult for them. After they had rented a space a couple of blocks away from the university hosting the event, a government representative contacted the owner and offered him more money to cancel the rental. Table 18 eventually secured another space with a landlord that kept their agreement.

At the opening session, Table 18 co-organizer Rafael Quispe, said, "Both capitalism and socialism depend on resource extraction, which is not compatible with taking care of Mother Earth. Eighty percent of Bolivia's economy, like other ALBA [the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America] countries depend on resource extraction." Table 18 heard accounts from dozens of communities impacted by destructive resource extraction within Bolivia and issued a declaration offering constructive criticism of the climate forum.

Its introduction read in part: "This working group established itself as a necessary space of reflection and criticism within the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of the Mother Earth. Its objective is to give a deeper examination into the local effects of global industrial capitalism. We take on the responsibility of questioning the so-called popular Latin American governments and their destructive and consumerist logic, and the deadly logic of neo extractive development."

David Solnit organizes with the coalition Mobilization for Climate Justice West and is co-author of *The Battle of the Story of the Battle of Seattle* and editor of *Globalize Liberation*.

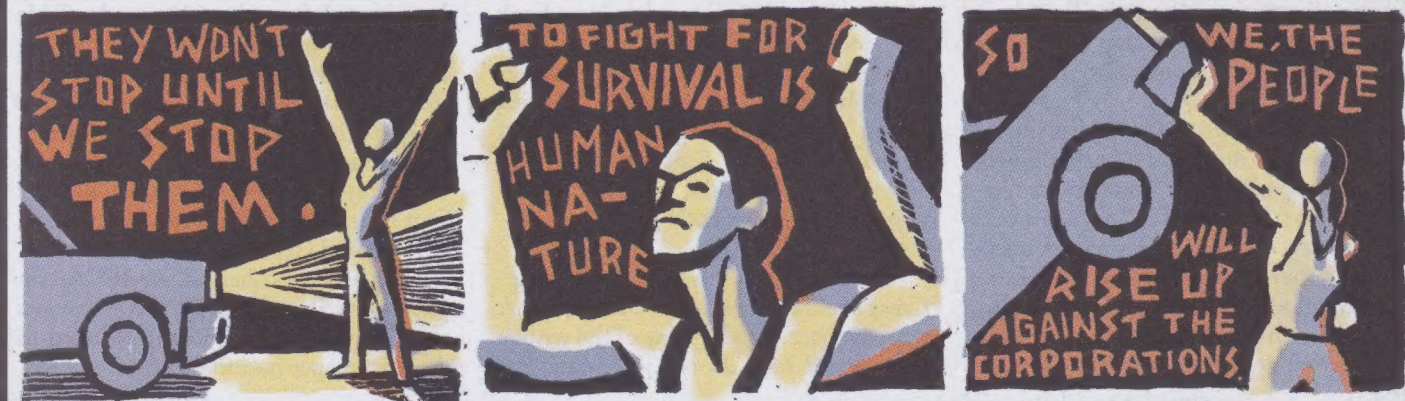
also do other forms of organizing. At the same time, the book is a plea for radicals who may see fiction as useless or frivolous to embrace the imagination and to be welcoming toward radicals who may lack the social skills for organizing but who want to contribute as artists.

In closing, I'll mention that Killjoy herself makes a charming and affable guide through this world of scribbling agitators. She's written short introductions to each interview, and it made me smile to learn that she "hitchhiked to California" to interview Derrick Jensen, for example. The book definitely has one foot in traveler culture, but takes a most colorful and creative point of view on it.

The book also helped me ID certain popular writers who I'd never known were anarchists; I'm looking forward to digging deeper into their work.

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